



Don't Forget

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Mark 2:18-22

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¹⁸ 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 do not fast?" ¹⁹ And 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. ²⁰ The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. ²¹ No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. ²² And 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."

(Pastor prays)

Don't forget. I have a silver band on my hand. It's beat up and ground down. In fact, it's broken right in the middle. And it says to me every time I look at it, "don't forget." Some of you here in this congregation are old enough to have Super 8 movies for home movies. Your parents took it on a reel to reel Super 8. Most of you, though, probably have home videos stored somewhere in a closet or up in the attic, and they're stacked there, almost forgotten. But they quietly whisper, "don't forget." Every adult I've known in the last 10 years or so that has gotten a tattoo (By the way, I'm 54 years old, I'm past the time

and gravity is getting hold. Don't put a tattoo on you.), every person I've known, who's an adult who has gotten a tattoo in the last 10 years has either gotten a Bible verse or something to do with a family, or both of them. And it serves as a silent statement that says, "don't forget." Even the church, for 2000 years, the church has maintained a practice— The Lord's Supper— and we will do it again today. It's a 2000-year practice that is a tangible act that preaches a two-word sermon: "don't forget." Don't forget the glad freedom you have in Christ. Don't forget the cost of your salvation. Don't forget that you are a new creation in Christ.

All of those reminders are present in the story we just read. Let's get the setting right here in Chapter 2. Jesus is in trouble again. You remember the times He got in trouble back in Chapters 1 and 2. Jesus gets in trouble first of all when they bring the paralyzed man to Him. They dig a hole in the roof and drop him down in front of Jesus. Jesus says "your sins are forgiven" and He heals the man. He gets in trouble there for claiming to have the power to forgive sins. The Pharisees didn't like that.

Later on, He's walking by the Sea of Galilee, and there He calls Levi, whose name is Matthew. You have a Gospel of Matthew. Levi is called to follow Him. Matthew, then Levi, is a tax collector. He's a sinner. He gets converted and follows Jesus. Levi is so glad, that he throws a party and invites all of his friends, who are also tax collectors and sinners. Jesus goes to the party and the Pharisees see Him sitting and eating with sinners. First He claims to forgive sins and now He is eating with the sinners. What will He do next?

Well in Chapter 2 verse 18, here's the third time Jesus is in trouble. This time the Pharisees and even John the Baptist and his disciples are fasting. They are participating in this religious activity. There's a certain expectation that if you are devoted to God, this is what you will do. John the Baptist and his disciples are doing it. The Pharisees and their disciples are doing it. And people are wondering, the question on the table becomes, "If you are so serious about God, why aren't you fasting?" The question comes to Him, and then what we're going to hear is Jesus opening up the windows of happiness

and explaining what it actually means to be a *bona fide* citizen of the Kingdom of God. And today, I want the clouds to evaporate from your soul. I want it so that your heart can smile again. I want you to reflect on and remember the saturating love of God found in Jesus Christ. Most of all, today, I want you not to forget.

Don't Forget How Good it is to Be in Christ

Don't forget. With that in mind, let's go to the story and consider what to remember. I'll give you a couple of things to remember. Here's the first one. Number one.

Don't forget joy

Don't forget what's happened in you. Join me in the story. Let's get the context and hear what Jesus is saying. Let me read verses 18 and 19 with some comment. John's disciples are fasting. That's John the Baptist. He is an ascetic. That is to say, he's out in the desert. He is preaching there. He's wearing the camel's hair and leather belt. He's eating locusts and wild honey from time to time. He's depriving himself. He's going without; fasting is something he did. John and his disciples are fasting. And the Pharisees, who are the most religious and probably had a lot in common with Jesus, they believed in God, they believe in scripture, they believed in resurrection, they really should have been on his team. The religious leaders there, they're fasting. The Pharisees made it a part of their weekly routine.

So John the Baptist and his disciples are fasting. The Pharisees are fasting and they come and ask a question: "Why aren't you?" Now let's pause there and think about fasting for atonement before I go too far. The only regularly prescribed fast in the whole Old Testament was on the Day of Atonement. The Day of Atonement was the day when the animals would be sacrificed. Even the priest would have his sins atoned for. The people would be reminded of their sinfulness before God and God's good forgiveness. And fasting was going without food to display sorrow and contrition over sin, both personally and publicly. All of that accompanied repentance before God and your

profound sorrow at your own sin against God. And over the course of time, the Pharisees picked it up and they started fasting as a part of their weekly routine. In fact, we find in Luke 18 the Pharisee and the tax gatherer.

Remember they're at the temple praying and the Pharisee, remember his prayer? "God, I thank you that I am not like other people." Which, by the way, if you're praying that right there, you're already in trouble. But this is what it says in the prayer. I tithe on everything I get and I fast twice a week. It was a way to show how serious you are about God. How sorry you are for your sin?

John the Baptist was doing it. His followers were doing it and people are wondering in verse 18, Jesus, if you are so serious about a holy God and the forgiveness of sins, why aren't you fasting? And in verse 19 Jesus introduces the illustration of a wedding feast. Now, before I read it, let me just give some background. In ancient Israel, the wedding feast is different from what we understand as a wedding feast. Here we have a wedding, and after the wedding, you go to the reception. There you see the bridegroom and the bride. All of the family speeches might be made. It might be a really nice evening. When Connie and I got married, we didn't have any money. So we got married at her Granddaddy's farm. It was a beautiful farmhouse on a 2,500-acre dairy farm. But we didn't have money for reception, so we got married on the front porch of the farmhouse and the reception was in the yard. We borrowed a tent from Trustmark Bank in Brookhaven, Miss. It was a big tent that everybody could be under and on the very front of it, it said Trustmark Bank. That was our wedding tent and under the tent it had nuts and I think there were some mints and a wedding cake. It's a nice reception and a good time. And in an hour and a half, everybody's gone. It was a pretty basic reception. But even at the most elaborate reception where you spend thousands of dollars and have a sit-down dinner with a steak meal, even the most elaborate reception in our day can't compare to the raucous wedding feast in Jesus Day. Those wedding feasts might last the entire week. All the people are there with music and food and wine and laughing. You might look forward all year long to the wedding feast.

Jesus takes that idea here to verse 19 to explain. Let me read it. ¹⁹ *And 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.* Now Jesus is not condemning the practice of fasting. What He's saying is that it is not the right time. Jesus is the bridegroom. The people are there and they are the wedding guests in the presence of Jesus. This is the time for festivity. This is the time for joy. It's not the right time to fast.

Typically, if you go to a funeral, you don't show up in a bathing suit. It's inappropriate. It's the wrong time. We haven't seen that yet. I'm sure John Harrill at some point in his career will see that. We've seen all kinds of things at funerals. You don't show up like that. A wedding is the same way. You don't show up at a wedding thinking it's a funeral. Weddings are time for festivity, not for fasting. And Jesus said the wedding guests have come, and the bridegroom is here. Throughout the Gospels, especially in Matthew, the Kingdom of Heaven is pictured as a wedding feast. It's all the way up to Revelation 19, where we see the marriage supper of the Lamb. Even John the Baptist, when Jesus came, John the Baptist would say, He must become greater, I must become less. The people would wonder, are you jealous that people are going over there to Jesus? And John says, you misunderstand, I'm the friend of the bridegroom. The bridegroom is here. And if you're the friend of the bridegroom, you rejoice when you hear his voice.

There is something exceptional and exciting about the ministry of the presence of Jesus. And the coming of Jesus into your life is a time of joy, not sorrow. Just like a wedding, the coming of Jesus is the beginning of a new relationship established with the people of God and established in Christ. Go with me in your mind through the Gospels, through the crucifixion. Jesus is crucified, dead and buried three days. Jesus departed for three days. But at the resurrection His promise is to be with you. Remember Matthew 28, the Great Commission. Jesus is ascending into Heaven, and He tells His disciples as He goes, "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them all that I have told you. I am with you to the end of the age." I want you to know the joy of

being in the Lord. In Philippians 1:25, Paul is talking to the church at Philippi and he says “I see your progress in joy and faith.” That is joy in the Lord.

We should have joy and worship when we gather together. You see it in the choir and the people on the stage leading. You see it in Olivier when he sings. You, with a lot of your hands up, you have joy. I’m reading in 2 Chronicles right now in my devotion. Judah has taken off in exile but, before they go, there’s one last really good King, Hezekiah. And Hezekiah restores the House of the Lord because there’s joy there. What you have is joy in your trial. And I was reminded of that this week. They have joy in the middle of it. And Paul says to the Church of Philippi, *“rejoice in the Lord always and again I’ll tell you, rejoice. Let your forbearing spirit be made known to all people that the Lord is near. Do not be anxious for anything but in prayer and supplication and with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God.”* I want you to have the joy of knowing your sins— look at me—if you’re in Christ, your sins are forgiven.

Don’t forget how good it is to be in Christ. Don’t forget joy. That’s one thing to put on the shelf, but let’s keep moving through the text. Let’s look at verse 20. Number 2.

Don’t forget the cost

It’s in verse 20. Do you see it? In verse 20 Jesus brings up fasting again. He brings up the appropriate time for fasting and in so doing He makes the very first reference in the Gospel of Mark to His dying on the cross. Read with me there. ²⁰ *The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.* The bridegroom is Jesus. The day will come when Jesus, the bridegroom, is taken away. You ought to circle it because that’s the only time you’ll ever see it in the New Testament. It feels like he’s quoting Isaiah. Isaiah used it one time to talk about the death of the “son of man” as he prophesied it. It’s like it’s picked up here. The days will come when He’s taken away. That phrase “taken away” means violently. It speaks to the violent nature of the cross. Jesus says, then at the cross, “when I’m taken away, that’s the time to fast.” If you come from a Catholic

background or an Orthodox Greek or Eastern Orthodox or even a Russian Orthodox background, the practice of fasting the week leading up to Easter, and especially on Friday, that comes from this passage. Devout Catholics often would fast every Friday; in that fast, they would not eat meat. You would eat fish. That comes from this passage right here. This passage that speaks of fasting when the bridegroom is taken away. Fasting is when you actually *remember*. When Christians fast now, Jesus said, when you fast, comb your hair, wash your face, make it look like you are doing OK. That is something between you and God and you do that to remember the cost of your sin. Jesus didn't condemn the fasting. What He did was He put a personal devotion on it. So that you and I might think about the depth of our sin and the cost of forgiveness.

It's why we have our Good Friday service like we do. When you come to church on the Sunday morning, we want it to be a joyful experience because Sunday is the day of joy, the day of resurrection. It's when the body of Christ comes together. We have people here to greet you and shake hands. We not only want to be a friendly church, we want it to be more than that. We want to be a joyful church. But there are days, like Good Friday, when the service will be different. When you come in on the Good Friday service, we will dwell on the heaviness and the somber nature of the cross. It'll feel different. It's why we have The Lord's Supper. We'll take The Lord's Supper today. It's why we have The Lord's Supper, to meditate on the depth of our sin. And then on an even deeper level, on the goodness of God. Of Him forgiving our sin and His supreme act to purchase you. You were costly. Don't forget. Make it your own. I would write it like this. Don't forget that He took my place. Don't forget that Jesus suffered for my sin. Don't forget that God killed His son so He would not have to kill you. It's the explicit.

It's the gospel of the cross of Christ. I want you not only to *know* it. I want you to know how to *explain* it. Here at Hickory Grove, we've borrowed an outline from a man named Greg Gilbert. It's a four-section outline. If you want to write them down write them down like this: God - man - Christ. We start with God always. You always start with God. The book starts with God. In the

beginning was God. God is given to us in the Bible as a holy and just and loving creator. Holy, just, loving. God created man, the second category. God created man in His image. The reason you have dignity, the basic reason that I respect you is that you are created in the image of God. You bear the image of God. That image of God in all of us, in me and you, that image has been messed up by sin. It's disfigured. Remember, God is holy and He is just and sin is a crime against God. It puts us in a bad situation. We are not just far from God. We have offended God and deserve His wrath. We are dead in sin. We've broken His law and the Bible says that the wages of sin is death. God is holy, man is a sinner. But remember, God is not just just, he is also loving. The third category is where Christianity is different from every other religion. Here, God shows His love in Christ. Christ is fully God and fully man. He had to be a man to save men and women. He came and did what we should have done, lived perfectly in perfect fellowship with God. He did that as our representative. He fulfilled all the laws, He didn't break one commandment. He never fell to temptation. He was the perfect man. He needed to live righteously because we can't. We go to the cross and there we find the very center of Christianity. What happens at the cross? Jesus is nailed to the cross. That's where a man dies. The wages of sin is His death. He takes the punishment for mankind. Jesus dies on the cross, and the wrath of God is poured out on Him there. And the righteousness, that He earned, is available. So you have God, man, Christ. There's the Gospel presented to you. There's one more category. That category is faith.

In order for the Gospel to actually be yours, it's not just you showing up in church or doing religious things. It is you trusting that what Jesus did on the cross was sufficient for your sins. They are taken away. You are forgiven by God and accepted by the Father. I want you to think with me. Have you believed that?

A lot of times in a church like ours, people will come and be baptized early in life, and then as they grow in the middle-school and high-school years, sometimes the ways of the world pull them such that they just get lost there. Often their life in college goes off the rails and they are not even sure if they

really were a Christian or not. And then something traumatic happens and they sort of wake up from that and show back up at church. And it's confusing because you don't know. Was it real? I'm asking you, have you put your faith in Christ? Do you trust that Jesus died for you?

Look, if you do, don't forget. Don't forget how good it is to be in Christ. Don't forget joy. Don't forget the cost. Let's go one more round. Turn to verse 22.

Don't forget the change.

That's how you know if it's real. Something happened. You've changed. Don't forget the change to explain the difference between those who are in Christ and those who are not in Christ. In verses 21 and 22, Jesus uses twin parables, two parables that actually have the very same point. I will read the first one, talk about it, and then the second one and talk about it. Let's explain what it means to be a "new creation." Join me there in verse 21. ²¹ *No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made.* Jesus is saying that you can't patch up an old coat with a new patch that hasn't been weathered in some way; it hasn't been through the wash at least once. If you put that new patch on that old coat, when it does finally go into the washing machine and the dryer, the patch is going to pull it away. In other words, it doesn't work. That's the point of verse 21. You cannot just add Jesus to your life. Jesus cannot be just added or integrated into your existing lifestyle, and you just keep living like you were. You can't just put Jesus in there to make you feel better. Jesus is not there as a patch to put over some anxiety or depression or hurt or bad feelings or anger that you have. Jesus isn't just a patch attached to an otherwise unchanged way of living. Jesus is not a partial patching up of your life. He is a whole new robe of righteousness. What did Paul say in Romans 13:13-14? Paul says, you know what? ¹³ *Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.* ¹⁴ *But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.* Or you might know 2 Corinthians 5:21 better. ²¹ *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no*

sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. We don't place Him as a patch over a portion of our lives. We put Him on as a covering.

The second parable gives the same point. Join me there verse 22. *No one puts new wine into old wineskins. If it does, the wine will burst the skins and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins.* A wineskin is made out of a goat skin. You kill the goat, take the skin and tan the hide, and while it's still pliable, you could take the new wine, and put it into the pliable goat skin, so that as the wine fermented and the gases came up, the wineskin would expand with the wine. That's new wine into new wineskins. What Jesus is saying is that you can do that, but what you don't do is take new wine—who is Christ—and put it into the existing structure of the life that you've got. That rigid old wineskin that you put in the new wine into, when the gases come from all of the fermentation, it's going to expand and destroy it. And his point is that it doesn't work. You can't just put Him into something that exists. There's a new creation. The Pharisees couldn't just take what Jesus is saying and keep doing what they're doing. He was the fulfillment. Paul writes in Ephesians 4:24, you are to put on the new self after the likeness of God in righteousness and holiness. Colossians 3:10 says, We have put on a new self which is being renewed in the knowledge after the image of the creator. Revelation 21:5 says, "He who is seated on the throne said behold, I am making all things new." You heard it in our baptism. When we baptize someone, we say, "buried with Him in baptism, raised to walk in new life." When we take The Lord's Supper today, you'll hear me quote the words of Jesus. When He says this cup is a new covenant. And in this fog of life, in the tiredness of a tough week, don't forget how good it is to be in Christ.

Don't forget the joy, the joy of the Lord. Don't forget the cost. We'll focus on that during The Lord's Supper. Don't forget the change. Is that change yours? It can be today if you will turn from your sin and by faith turn to Christ.

(Pastor prays)