


The Gospel of Mark
Part 10
The Old Versus the New

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

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A publication of  the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Triangle Community Church aims to be a "transforming church". We exist to be used by God as He transforms ordinary people into extraordinary followers of Jesus Christ. TCC believes not only that life-change is possible—but that it is to be expected. Growth is God's will for his people. But transformation does not happen by accident. It requires intentional, intelligent action. 1 Timothy 4:7 instructs you to "discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness." Since "Talking Points, Walking Points" is intended both for individual reflection and for group discussion, questions vary in degree of vulnerability required. Generally it is best to begin group discussions with questions which involve less personal disclosure—but don't linger there. Be sure to "dive deep" too! The questions which require the greatest openness and honesty, as well as those in the section entitled "Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time", are perfect for private reflection.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you?
...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?
- Read Mark 2:15-18. Jesus seems to be saying that some people already are righteous, not needing his forgiveness. Is that the correct interpretation of his words? Why or why not? How do we know?
Read Luke 18:9-14. What light does v. 9 shed on the question of not needing forgiveness?
What parallels do you see between Luke 18:12 and Mark 2:18?
Two men are described in Luke 18:11 & 13. Recast these descriptions in 21st century American terms.
With which one do you more identify? Why? In what ways?
Do you find v. 14 scandalous? Should we? Why or why not?
- Read Romans 4:4-8. According to v. 4, what sort of people does God justify and declare righteous?
King David is speaking of his own experience. What adjectives does this passage apply to him?
What is the historical background to this passage? (If you're not sure, see 2 Samuel 11.)
Psalm 51:10-17 gives David's response to that historical event. Summarize it in your own words.
To what degree do you identify with that sentiment? Which parts of it are foreign to you?

Sermon Summary Key Text: Mark 2:13-22

Throughout Jesus' ministry he called people to follow him in discipleship. In one sense, there was a call to everyone to receive him as their Messiah and to embrace the coming kingdom of God. But there was also a more specific call which not everyone received. It was a call to literally leave whatever you were doing—your job, your family, to travel with Jesus and to aid him in his public ministry. Peter and his brother Andrew were the first men to whom Jesus issued this special call to be his disciples. Next up Jesus called into discipleship James and John. These four disciples, Peter, Andrew, James and John were all successful fishermen—which was a huge industry in that region. They left successful businesses to follow Jesus in discipleship. (Two of these disciples—Peter and Matthew—will record biographies of Jesus' life.) In today's text we find the call of Matthew-Levi, a tax collector.

In Jesus' day Israel was under Roman occupation and was forced to pay oppressive taxes to the Roman Empire. Levi held the lucrative tax franchise in Capernaum. Tax collectors were typically Jews who placed bids for the available jobs by submitting estimates of how much tax revenue they believed they could collect. If the Roman officials liked a person's bid, they would be selected as a tax collector and were given a quota they had to reach. Once they met that quota, they could keep everything else they collected. Can you see how this system was rigged for exploitation? While tax collector jobs were certainly lucrative, the job came with heavy social costs. Tax collectors were considered traitors. By becoming a tax collector they gave up their Jewish identity, their social status, and their membership in the synagogue. They were a disgrace to their families. Anyone who befriended a tax collector was considered unclean. It lowered your social score in the community and you found yourself ostracized. Can you see how radical and unprecedented it would have been for Jesus, a respected Jewish Rabbi, to choose Levi as a disciple? But Jesus didn't care what people thought. His choices were driven by his Kingdom mission and values, not by his perceived social status. We are way too concerned about what others think, but God loves us in spite of who we are.

Jesus called Levi, and much to the dismay of the others, he accepted the invitation. Here is a spiritual lesson to be learned: Don't ever prejudge who you think will or will not respond to Jesus. All we see is the outside of the person; we don't know what God is doing to prepare their heart. When given the opportunity, Matthew chose to follow Jesus. Then he threw a dinner party. Matthew was the host, Jesus was the guest of honor, and the guests were Matthew's friends—other tax collectors and many others whom the religious authorities branded as "sinners." Somehow, the scribes and Pharisees—Jewish religious leaders—learned about this dinner party, and let their displeasure be known, fearing that contact with "sinners" causes us to become contaminated. But remember this: we can associate with people without adopting their values. That's what Jesus did. As long as we are the ones doing the influencing, it is a spiritually safe, redemptive relationship. As followers of Christ, we all need those kinds of relationships. As Jesus said, "What good is a doctor who only associates with healthy people?" Problem is, the Scribes and Pharisees didn't realize that they had the same spiritual condition they accused others of having! When Jesus said, "I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners," His words were dripping with irony. For these religious leaders were themselves sinners in need of a Savior. In some respects, they were the sickest of the sick, because they failed to recognize their spiritual need. That is a very dangerous place to be. Spiritually sick, and blind to your true condition.

While they were at it, the Pharisees used this opportunity to launch another complaint against Jesus. Because Jesus and his disciples didn't fast, they clearly weren't as spiritual as the disciples of John and the Pharisees! It's the comparison game: we compare others with ourselves in an area of our strength, and we find them wanting. "We set the spiritual bar around here, and clearly you're not reaching it. Jesus, what do you have to say for yourself?" But the Law of Moses required fasting only during the period leading up to the Day of Atonement. But the Pharisees made up their own man-made rules; they fasted twice a week. They saw it as a badge of their personal piety. Jesus wasn't playing by their spiritual rules, and they didn't like it! It's easy to criticize the Pharisees, but the truth is, we are often guilty of the same kind of things. We can make certain spiritual activities a "litmus test" of spirituality. We must not make good things into ultimate things—spiritual badges that we use to judge others' spiritual fitness and devotion to God. In response to the criticism that he hung out with tax collectors and sinners, Jesus essentially said, "Guilty as charged! I came to convert sinners, not to compliment the self-righteous."

Jesus responded to this criticism about fasting by explaining that this was not the time for his disciples to fast (that time would come later, when he returned to heaven). Jesus said, "I'm the Bridegroom! This is a time of gladness, not sadness. This is a time to feast, not to fast!" The Jews knew that marriage was one of the pictures used in the Old Testament to help explain Israel's relationship to God (Isaiah 54:5). It also pictured their spiritual adultery (Jeremiah 31:31-32)! Jesus was claiming much more than messiahship by referring to himself as the bridegroom—he was claiming to be God in the flesh! And his reference to a future time when we will fast in sorrow (2:20) was a veiled reference to his coming crucifixion and departure. After his death and departure there will be plenty of time for fasting.

Finally, Jesus taught that he came to introduce something new, not to patch up something old (v. 21-22). You cannot take the new and force it into the old structures, because the old structures cannot bear it. I came to introduce something new, not to patch up something old. Jesus appreciated the religious leaders' commitment to the Old Testament Law of God. What he was condemning was the non-Biblical traditions that had come to define Pharisaic Judaism. At so many points they had come to misunderstand the purpose of the Law. The Scribes and Pharisees would be out of alignment with their Messiah King unless they scrapped their unbiblical traditions and submitted fully to his teaching. By talking about patches and wineskins Jesus was warning the Pharisees that their teaching and His were incompatible. And unless they were willing to embrace him as their Messiah king, they would not be attending the future marriage of the bridegroom and his Bride. Don't try to force your unbiblical spiritual ideas and opinions with those of Jesus. It's like sewing a new patch on an old garment. It's like putting new wine in old wineskins. They are incompatible. We come on his terms or we don't come at all!

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

*The Jewish leaders should have expected that God would do "something new".
Use the "Five Question Bible Study" sheet below to study the "New Covenant"...*

Monday—Read Jeremiah 31:31-34

Tuesday—Read Ezekiel 11:19-21

Wednesday—Read Ezekiel 36:22-32

Thursday—Read Ezekiel 36:33-38

Friday—Read Hebrews 8:7-13; 9:15-23 & 12:18-24

Saturday—Read Luke 22:14–20 & 1 Corinthians 11:23–26

Need blank copies for doing more
"Five Question Bible Study"?

e-mail: Dan.Clement.TCC@gmail.com

Five Question Bible Study

Bible Text: _____

Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]