Mark 2:13 – 3:6: More... Jesus: Rest

# Opening:

* Last week Pastor Dave challenged us to be more hospitable. How did you do?

## Reviewing the Teaching

* Read the passage aloud as a group.
* Today’s passage has four conflict stories where the Pharisees make accusations against Jesus and Jesus responds. Jesus’ responses are equally provocative to the accusations. He claims to be the Bridegroom, the Son of Man and Lord of the Sabbath, each of which is a claim to be God. The question at stake is whether we connect with God through rules or a relationship and the life controlling results of each answer.
* Read Mark 2:17 again. On Sunday, Pastor Mel described the Pharisee’s view of righteousness. How provocative is this statement?
* In Mark 2:14, Jesus commands Levi with the same words as 1:17 and 20. What is the significance of Levi’s response? What is happening at the dinner party? How is Levi different than Simon and Andrew?
* Why is it so difficult to see that Jesus wants to accept us as friends? Is it humbling? Would you rather earn something? In Jewish society, Levi was so low that you had to dig a hole to get low enough. What does Jesus say when He calls Levi?
* For the next three stories it is helpful to understand the point of view of the Pharisees. The Pharisees wanted to ensure that Israel never went into exile again for failing to keep God’s commandments. To do this they put fences around the Law to ensure that no one broke it. The Law required fasting only on the Day of Atonement. But, if fasting once a year is good, then fasting, even for part of a day, twice a week, is better. Because the Sabbath had many regulations, they had many extra Sabbath fences. They defined righteousness as obeying these rules. This action would lead to the coming of the Messiah who would lead them out of the oppression to Rome.
* Read Isaiah 62:4 and 5. Who is the bridegroom?
* Fasting was a time to mourn over out sinfulness. John the Baptist lead a time of repentance leading to the Messiah so for his disciples to fast was expected. With the Pharisees, it turned into an act of self- righteous arrogance. In their fasting tradition, a wedding was a celebration where fasting was not allowed. Why did Jesus’ disciples not fast?
* In the examples of the cloth and the wineskins, Jesus is saying that He gives something more. The old garments and wineskins could not hold the new. What is it that He gives more of?

## Engaging the Message

* Good enough or Grace? You can only pick one! The Pharisees were at the pinnacle of obeying the rules to obtain acceptance from God. On Sunday Pastor Mel talked about what a former Pharisee had learned about being good enough.
* Read Romans 3:10 and 11. A former Pharisee, Paul, explains that when we do not keep the standard, and no one can, that we are worthless or useless. Deep inside, we know our sin and failure. We hope no one else can see them. If our heart does not tell us we have failed, it at least casts doubt. This conflict means that we will never feel certain about our worth. Have you ever experienced this? How do we hide what we are like from other people? How does it make you feel when you come before God?
* A few pages later, Paul writes Romans 5:17 – 21. Paul talks about grace and the gift of righteousness. How are we made righteous? Why does Paul call it a gift? Is it valuable even though we do not pay for it?
* Good enough is a tough standard. Around us are sport stars, movie stars and billionaires. We idolize them. But, if you read the news, if that is good enough, it is not really good enough. What happens in our life when we cannot have what we want?
* Romans 5:19 describes that sinners are made righteous. When God accepts you by grace, does He really understand what you are like?
* Mark 3:1-6 adds a new element to the acceptance or friendship that we have with God. What happened when the man stretched out his hand? What does restored mean?
* Sabbath, in Hebrew, derives from the word rest. In English, restore is a better word. The Sabbath is a day to celebrate God’s goodness and be healed and restored. Tim Keller wrote this:

“At the end of his great act of creation, the Lord said, ‘It is finished,” and he could rest. On the cross, at the end of his great act of redemption, Jesus said, ‘It is finished” ... and we can rest… On the cross Jesus was saying of the work underneath your work – the thing that truly makes you weary, this need to prove yourself because who you are and what you do are never good enough – that it is finished. He has lived the life you should have lived, he has died the death you should have died. **If you rely on Jesus’s finished work, you know that God is satisfied with you. [And] you can be satisfied with life.”**

* What changes when we do not need to prove ourselves? Is God really satisfied with you?

# PRAYER

(Consider breaking up into small groups of 3 or 4, either as couples, or as just men and just women)

* Ask God for wisdom to live in His acceptance and restoration.
* Are there…
  + Specific things to pray about?
  + Specific needs to focus on?
  + A prayer focus that comes out of the message?