

Sermon Series: Who is this man?
{The Book of Mark}
Sermon Title: Starving for Jesus [Sermon #10]
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Almost all religions practice fasting of some kind.

Muslims fast during Ramadan and other days.

Gandhi fasted for political reasons.

People fast when they are in mourning.

Buddhists fast.

Hindus fast.

Monks of all sorts fast.

People fast for health reasons. They drink fruit smoothies.

Well, is fasting Christian?

It has been quite common in church history through the ages.

Not that common now.

In fact, I would say most Christians today are at the end of one of two extremes:

NEVER FAST — — — SELF-RIGHTEOUS FASTING.

More about that later.

What is fasting? Abstaining from food (or anything really) for a special or most often religious observance.

Is fasting in the Bible?

Jesus fasted for 40 days @ the beginning of his ministry.

Acts 13- fasted and God sent out missionaries.

Ezra 8- people fasted to avert danger and threats.

2 Samuel & 1 Chronicles- people fasted to express sorrow or loss.

Joel 2- people fasted to repent and grieve.

Today, let's take a look at Mark 2:18-22.

Mark 2:18-22

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."

Remember the **structure** from last week?

- * Jesus does something controversial
- * Questions come from the religious teachers
- * Answer by Jesus

Question comes why Jesus' disciples are not fasting like John the Baptists' disciples and the Pharisees were.
This could have been the day of Atonement, but probably not.

It was probably just one of the other festivals or another day when they happened to fast.

1. (A) Jesus' disciples are not fasting....they're feasting.

Remember...with sinners.

Should they be fasting like the others?

John's disciples would have followed John's practices and John was an ascetic...a simple hermit..a prophet.

He drank no wine, no haircut from birth, wore animal skins and ate grasshoppers and honey.

John's message was one of repentance.

He preached that to escape the judgement of God you needed to get ready for Messiah's kingdom.

'Get ready for something that was going to come.'

Jesus' disciples didn't need to fast for that. Messiah (Jesus) was already there.

The kingdom of God had arrived already.

No need to fast for something that had already come.

(B) Disciples of the Pharisees were super religious and self righteous fakes.

The fasted 2x a week and would announce it to people, look gloomy, wear rags and cover themselves in dust.
Jesus said they did it to impress people.

No doubt some of them were drawing close to God too.

Jesus' disciples didn't need this kind of fasting either.

God is in the flesh with them.

They can't get any closer to God than they are right now.

*Both of these types of fasting are **INAPPROPRIATE** because of the fact that Jesus & his kingdom are there.

2. Jesus responds with 3 illustrations. 3 parables.

- Bridegroom and wedding guests.
- Patches and clothing
- Wine and wineskins.

In these statements Jesus tells us what the true nature of fasting is.

v.19 “Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.”

A Jewish wedding was a one week affair where people feasted and danced and sang.

It was the happiest time of their lives.

It was a joyous occasion.

Weddings are not for fasting. Fasting is about sorrow. Fasting is about hungering. It's hard. It's painful.
Weddings are about joy and celebration.

THIS TIME is a joyous time.
Jesus has come.
The kingdom of God has come.

The bridegroom is here.

In the Old Testament, God is the bridegroom and Israel is the bride.

{[Isaiah 62:5](#), [Ezekiel 16:8](#), [Hosea 2:19-20](#)}

*Jesus is making a startling claim when he calls himself the Bridegroom.

(Remember John the Baptist said he was the 'best man'

[John 3:28-29](#))

This is no time for fasting.

*John's disciples and the Pharisees should have been feasting and celebrating along with the disciples of Jesus.

So, it's INAPPROPRIATE to fast at a wedding.

It's INAPPROPRIATE to put a new patch on an old garment. It will tear. v. 21

It's INAPPROPRIATE to put new wine into old wineskins. They will burst. v.22

Verse 20 will give us some insight into what true fasting is.... there will come a day when the Bridegroom is taken away from them....and then they will fast.

So, Bridegroom is with you....don't fast.
Bridegroom (Jesus) is not with you....fast.

Jesus is going to leave. He's going to ascend into heaven and not be with them in bodily form anymore. Then they will fast.

WHAT IS APPROPRIATE FASTING?

Fasting is this....plain and simple.....to get more of Jesus.

Fasting is saying, "more than my soul wants food {or internet, or TV, or sports, or anything else}, my soul wants you."

"Fasting is the exclamation point (!) at the end of the prayer, 'God, I need you more than anything!'" John Piper

Fasting is doing without something that has a hold on you.

Instead of doing that....something.....you spend time with God and prayer and read his Word.

*If you don't eat for 3 days and don't do any prayer or Bible reading...or seeking God....that's not fasting.. that's called starving yourself.

Many today see fasting as this:

I will do without desserts, or sweets, or Coke or internet or food for such a time...and God will be impressed with that and give me what I want.

That is nothing but gross useless religion.

Doesn't profit anything.

GOD IS NOT IMPRESSED BY YOUR DISCIPLINE.

And according to Matthew 6, posting your fasting on Facebook is going to make it useless.

Seek God and pour out your soul to him and desire him.

Fasting gives you more time to do it and fasting breaks the hold that things have on us.

Some good quotes on fasting.

We cover up what is inside of us with food and other things.”⁶

out of the mouth of God”? Fasting is a way of revealing to ourselves and confessing to our God what is in our hearts. Where do we find our deepest satisfaction—in God or in his gifts?

higher hunger that isn't. Christian fasting is not only the spontaneous effect of a superior satisfaction in God; it is also a chosen weapon against every force in the world that would take that satisfaction away. the indication of love. The apostle Paul said, “I will not be dominated by anything” (1 Corinthians 6:12). Fasting reveals the measure of food's mastery over us—or television or computers or whatever we submit to again and again to conceal the weakness of our hunger for God.

Some things to fast for:

1. A deeper walk with God. More of the bridegroom. More of Jesus.
2. For our neighbors to be saved. Fast from food, internet, TV and pray pray pray for them more. How bad do we want them to be saved?

3. Ministry of our church. How bad do we want to reach this area? Bad enough to fast and pray and seek God's face?
4. Fast and pray for discernment. Need some answers? How bad do we want to hear from God? Bad enough to skip some meals or TV or movies and get on our face?
5. In danger? threats? **Ezra 8:21-23** the people fasted and prayed because they were in danger.
6. Fasting for Jesus' return and for the sending out of missionaries to the nations. **Acts 13**

Fasting is for getting more of Jesus.

You need more today? Maybe you don't know him!
Call out to him today to save you. He will.

Christian, Do without a meal.

Do without a show.

Do without some Facebook (don't post it)

Starve yourself from those things that choke out the word
and.....**FEED ON JESUS.**

Amen.

