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Uniquely Jesus

October 2, 2016

Mark 3

Soul Stories

In Mark 2, Jesus told the paralyzed man, “Your sins are forgiven.” Every Jewish person of that day knew that when it came to asking forgiveness of sins, you had to go to the Temple in Jerusalem, where God promised his presence would be. The Jewish people believed that “heaven” and “earth” were not far apart, but actually overlapped and interlocked, there at the Temple.

Simply Jesus, p.133

With those four words, “*Your sins are forgiven,*” Jesus said he was now the place where heaven and earth intersected, not the Temple in Jerusalem.

To see him was to see God; to hear him, was to hear God’s voice; to be forgiven by him was to have one’s sins truly forgiven.

The implications of this are profound.

A short time later Jesus made another stunning statement.

Read [Mark 2:23-24](#).

What is your understanding of the “Sabbath?” And... do you think it has any application to us today?

Please introduce yourself to people you might not have met yet.

And then chat together about these two questions.

When I was a kid, the church my family attended, like many other churches of that time, viewed Sunday as the Sabbath.

What Jesus announced about the Sabbath, will go over our heads, unless we put ourselves back into the story and understand how the people of that day viewed the Sabbath.

Let’s start by reading what God said to Moses about the day.

Genesis 2:2-3:

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Exodus 20:8-11:

*“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. **9** Six days you shall labor and do all your work, **10** but the seventh day is a sabbath **to** the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, **nor your animals**, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.*

11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. *Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*

Deuteronomy 5:12-15:

*Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. **13** Six days you shall labor and do all your work, **14** but the seventh day is a sabbath **to** the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, **nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals**, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, **so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do.***

15 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. *Therefore, the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.*

* The seventh day was a gift from God.

When God gave the law to Moses, he explained in greater detail what it meant to have a day of rest. On that day, God said that his people, including any foreigners living among them, as well as their animals, were to pause from going about their normal activities, and rest.

On that day, they were to look back, in order to remember... the Creator God’s power and example, as well as his faithfulness in rescuing them from Egypt, where they had been slaves.

The word "Sabbath" comes from the root word “Shin-Beit-Tav,” meaning to cease, to end, or to rest. <http://www.jewfaq.org/shabbat.htm>

Let me say it again – the seventh day, the Sabbath, was a gift from God.

In the centuries that followed, varying questions were asked as to what specifically “the law to rest” meant in this or that situation. The questions once debated and answered, became part of an oral tradition that was strictly followed.

Eventually there were **39 prohibited activities.**

Sowing	Beating wool	Flaying
Plowing	Dyeing wool	Tanning
Reaping	Spinning	Scraping hide
Binding sheaves	Weaving	Marking hides
Threshing	Making two loops	Cutting hide to shape
Winnowing	Weaving two threads	Writing two or more letters
Selecting	Separating two threads	Erasing two or more letters
Grinding	Tying	Building
Sifting	Untying	Demolishing
Kneading	Sewing stitches	Extinguishing a fire
Baking	Tearing	Kindling a fire
Shearing wool	Trapping	Putting the finishing touch on an object
Washing wool	Slaughtering	Transporting an object between a private domain and the public domain, or for a distance of 4 cubits within the public domain.

http://www.thenazareneway.com/sabbath/39_prohib_sabbath.htm

As you can see from the list, reaping grain was a prohibited activity.

Mark is going to show Jesus going out of his way to challenge these rules about what couldn't be done on the day of rest, the Sabbath. We want to ask why?

Let's read Mark 2:23-28.

The story of David and Abiathar is found in 1 Samuel 21.

What was Jesus' point in referencing this incident?

The need of David and his men superseded “the law” about consecrated bread, just like the hunger of his disciples superseded “the law” to not “reap grain.”

The religious leaders said it was the oral tradition handed down over centuries that determined what could be done. Jesus said, “I decide.”

Do you see what he's claiming?

Jesus didn't say to them, “I am Lord over the Sabbath.”

For then the Pharisees could have countered, our oral traditions trump your opinion.

Jesus said...I am **Lord of the Sabbath.**

He claimed to be the One who had given the day of rest after Creation; the One who elaborated to Moses what his people were to do on that day. God's intent for the seventh day was to remind people, on a weekly basis, not only of their need for physical rest, but their need of soul rest which is found only in God.

Tom Wright says:

"Just as the Temple was the place where heaven and earth intersected, so the Sabbath was the day when human time and God's time met..."

In addition to the weekly sabbath, every seventh year was a year of agricultural rest and the seven-times-seventh year the year of Jubilee - the time when slaves were to be freed, debts cancelled, and for life to get back on track...

The Jubilee was, as it were, the once-in-a-lifetime "exodus" that everyone could experience. It was the reminder that God's time was being marked out week by week, seven years by seven years, half century by half century...

Matthew arranges Jesus' genealogy in three groups of fourteen generations (six seven's) so that Jesus is born at the start of the sabbath of sabbath's moment. When Jesus was born, many like Simon and Elizabeth, were pondering, calculating and longing for the greatest super-jubilee of them all, the "the seventy weeks," (that is seventy times seven years) mentioned by Daniel in 9:24.

When Jesus said in Mark 1:15, "The time has come," he was referring to this super-jubilee. It was completely consistent with Jesus' vision of his own vocation that he would do things that said, again and again from one angle after another, that the time had arrived, that the future, the new creation, had come, and that one no longer needed the sabbath. The Sabbath wasn't a rule that could now be abolished. It was a signpost whose purpose had been accomplished."

Simply Jesus, p.136-138.

Are you starting to see that the conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders was not over a number of inconsequential issues.

3:1-6 illustrates what Jesus meant when he said he is the Sabbath.

After the "grain field incident," the religious leaders began to watch Jesus, looking for specific things which they could use to accuse him of wrongdoing.

They began to gather "evidence."

Wherever Jesus went...they went. Every Sabbath day some of them were in the synagogue he attended....watching, listening.

Jesus knew they were there this particular day, but what did he do?
He didn't back down; he didn't change his teaching topic; and he didn't ignore the need of the man with the shrivelled hand.

v.3 – Jesus asked the man with the shrivelled hand to come forward.

v.4 – then Jesus asked the Pharisees who had come to spy on him, a question:
“Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?”

The Pharisees refused to answer. Do you know why?

Because their answer would have been an admission that they were wrong.

Just as Jesus saw the man with the withered hand, so, by the enabling of the Holy Spirit, he saw the **withered souls** of the Pharisees.

v.5a - what he saw angered him.

Remember - Jesus reveals to us who God is.

There is lot of talk out there about the cruel Old Testament God.

Yes, God can become angry. But not on a whim. Not as a psychopath.

If someone, as absolutely perfect and good as he reveals himself to be, was indifferent to the horror of sin, we would question his goodness.

God stands opposed to sin and those who practice it, because it is a cancer that totally corrupts. And he will not ignore it. He will not look the other way.

But did you catch what else Mark wrote?

v.5b – Jesus was deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts. Don't miss that.

God is not indifferent; unmoved by those who choose to reject him.

He doesn't want anyone to perish; he wants everyone to come to repentance.

2 Peter 3:9

It deeply distresses him to see what humanity has become.

Those Pharisees stubbornly believed they were right.

It didn't matter to them that a man was there among them with great need.

Their rules said...

As far as they were concerned, nobody works on the Sabbath, NOBODY!

Not even God.

The silence in the synagogue was broken when Jesus said: “Stretch out your hand.”

Jesus asked that man to do something he couldn't do, just like when he asked the paralyzed man to get up.

Romans 10:17 says, **"Faith comes from hearing..."**

Hearing what? "...the message" of Jesus.

However small his faith might have been, having heard Jesus' word, the man attempted to stretch out his hand, and as he obeyed Jesus, strength from Jesus met him and healing came to him.

Mark intentionally records for his readers the reactions of the people who saw Jesus perform miracles. And in this incident, the reaction Mark wants us to be aware of, is that of the Pharisees. v.6 - *"They went out..."*

They were not happy with what had happened.

In fact, what they had seen, convinced them that drastic measures had to be taken.

How drastic? In their opinion, Jesus had to die.

But to achieve this goal they had to form an alliance with the Herodians.

An expression which originated in India in the 4th century BC best explains this alliance:

"The enemy of my enemy is my friend."

The Herodians were viewed by the Pharisees as traitors to Judaism because they supported King Herod Antipas, and his efforts to introduce Greek culture into Judaism. That said, the Herodians had something the Pharisees didn't - political power. And so for the sake of expediency, the Pharisees joined forces with them.

Years later, as the end neared, Caiaphas formed a similar alliance with Pilate, in order to send Jesus to his death.

How does Jesus' teaching connect with us today?

This clash between Jesus and the religious leaders is far more than a 2000 year old controversy over matters that don't matter anymore.

The pull to have **a book of rules** can be very strong.

But neither you nor anyone else are able to come up with enough rules to cover every scenario/every possibility that could happen.

Jesus' example and teaching emphasizes to his followers a much better way to live.

John 16:7-15:

But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 8 When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment:

9 about sin, because people do not believe in me; **10** about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; **11** and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

12 "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. **13** But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, **he will guide you into all the truth.** He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and **he will tell you what is yet to come.**

14 He will glorify me because **it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.** **15** All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you."

Jesus doesn't give a book of rules to guide his followers, nor is this (hold up the Bible) a rule book. We need to remember this.

Instead of a rulebook, Jesus gives to us the person of the Holy Spirit.

This is why it is so important that we learn to listen to and know it is his voice speaking. The Holy Spirit is more than capable to teach and to direct us in every matter.

And most importantly, this is how Jesus lived - so we know it works!

There is a second point of connection.

* Tom Wright says:

"How can you live with the terrifying thought that the **hurricane** has become human, that **fire** has become flesh, that life itself became life and walked in our midst? Christianity either means that, or it means nothing."

For All Gods Worth, p.1

The question we asked last week is whether Jesus is still perceived by people in our culture as a person of extraordinary ability.

When you and I live in a culture that is under-whelmed by Jesus, there is a relentless squeezing upon our souls to think of Jesus in a diminished way.

Tom Wright reminds us Jesus is the hurricane who became human.

He is a person whose greatness astonishes.

Jesus is the fire who became flesh.

He is a person of great power and he cannot be controlled.

He is the life who became life.

Jesus has lived forever and he chose to be born among us.

This is who we follow.

Our awareness of his greatness needs to grow; it needs to be stretched.

Our wonder of him must continually increase.
Jesus needs to capture our imagination in fresh ways.

Timothy Keller writes: *“Either Jesus is a wicked liar and you should have nothing to do with him, or he is who he says he is and your whole life has to revolve around him and you have to put everything at his feet and say, ‘Command me.’*
*If Jesus is who he says he is, he must become **the still point** of your turning world, the center around which your entire life revolves.”* King’s Cross, p.45

The passage in Mark 3 which we’ve studied poses the question to each one of us - is Jesus the center around which our entire life revolves?

“When Jesus said he is Lord of the Sabbath, he is saying, he is the Sabbath; he is the source of the deep rest of soul every human needs and craves.” King’s Cross, p.42-43

He is the One who brings **rest to our souls**; and not just once a week, but daily, moment by moment.

Many of you have made Jesus the center of your life - this passage then reminds us we never reach a point where we no longer need to say to Jesus, “Command me.”
As we walk with Jesus, and his Spirit is active to bring newness to every aspect of our life, keeping Jesus the center will need to be a daily choice, because the default of our human nature, is for us to be the center.

Is there any aspect of your life where Jesus does not command you?

In your thoughts?

In your choices?

In your associations?

In your relationships?

In your family?

In your marriage?

In your job?

In your studies?

Are you willing this morning to put that aspect at his feet?

Will you follow him in living in that area of your life, as he would?

Will you act in faith to obey him, believing that as you do, the Spirit will meet your faith with his power?

Jesus is absolutely trustworthy. So trust him.

If Jesus isn't yet the center of your life, listen to what he says.

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Matthew 11:28-30

Think about it: the one who is the hurricane will give you rest.

The one you can't control will bring his peace to your heart and mind.

The one who is life will make you alive to God.

If you come to him, it will be an act of faith to do so - like the man who stretched out his hand; or like the paralytic who got up off the mat.

You hear what he says and then you take Jesus at his word.

As you move towards him, he will meet you.

It is then and only then as you turn away from a way of living that has excluded him... to one that puts him at the center, that you will experience the rest of soul he speaks of.

It's the rest that comes when he forgives our sins.

Many of us here have experienced this rest. And you can too...today

But you must come to him.

Listen to this song that speaks of God's invitation to us.

Come As You Are, David Crowder, Lyric Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HELQyZNnR-g>

Come As You Are, David Crowder

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HELQyZNnR-g>

Verse 1

Come out of sadness from wherever you've been
Come broken-hearted let rescue begin
Come find your mercy O sinner come kneel
Earth has no sorrow that Heaven can't heal
Earth has no sorrow that Heaven can't heal

Chorus

(So) Lay down your burdens lay down your shame
All who are broken lift up your face O wanderer come home
You're not too far, So lay down your hurt lay down your heart
Come as you are

Verse 2

There's hope for the hopeless and all those who've strayed
Come sit at the table come taste the grace
There's rest for the weary, rest that endures
Earth has no sorrow that Heaven can't cure

Bridge

Come as you are; fall in His arms; come as you are

Verse 3

There's joy for the morning O sinner be still
Earth has no sorrow that Heaven can't heal
Earth has no sorrow that Heaven can't heal

Ending

Come as you are; come as you are; come as you are

The Healing (3:1-6)

Based on what we now know about the OT Sabbath day being a signpost that pointed to Jesus; and that it is Jesus who brings to his followers' true rest of soul, is the concept of a weekly day of rest still applicable?

If it is how would you see yourself best utilizing this day?

What refreshes you physically?

What refreshes you mentally?

What refreshes you emotionally?

What refreshes you spiritually?

The Twelve (3:13-3:19)

Jesus now appoints the twelve. He starts with the crowd, but as he goes up the hill, the crowd thins out, and those whom he desired come to him (at least 12, maybe more).

Then he appoints 12 to:

1. Be with him
2. Be sent out to preach
3. Have authority to cast out demons.

He also renames 3, the inner circle. This indicates that Jesus has the authority to rename. What is the significance of renaming them? How does this speak to Jesus defining our identity?

Concentric circles of intimacy:

1. The crowd, who heard of him and came to him
2. The many, whom he healed, whom he touched, those near him
3. The called, whom he desired, came to him on the hill
4. The twelve, whom he appointed, to be with him and be like him
5. The three, whom he renamed.

Jesus is sifting.

The crowds are so large that Jesus needs help to administrate the ministry, he creates a structure through which to serve the crowd. But the greatest priority of the twelve is to be with him, not to do ministry. What does this say to us of the importance to Jesus of us "being" with him?

Accusations (3:20-30)

Describe the situation: crowds, family, scribes, accusations. The teachers of the law have probably come all the way from Jerusalem to see him, interview him. He's causing quite a stir.

Why do his family think he's crazy? Just because of poor eating habits?

Remember, he's just been up a mountain, calling the 12. He looks very much like Moses going up the mountain; the 12 tribes of Israel. In appointing people, he is acting politically, like the messiah. His family KNOW he's not the messiah, so they think he's crazy.

Why do the teachers of the law think he's possessed?

They have to explain how he casts out demons, and they don't want to say it's from God. Because it's the demons who have identified him as the son of God, they think the demons work for him.

How does Jesus respond to teachers of the law?

He calls to them, demonstrates his interest in them, answers them. He explains that:

- His authority over demons comes because he has beaten and bound Satan.
- If a kingdom is divided against itself, the kingdom can't stand.
- If a house is divided against itself, the house can't stand.
- If Satan has risen up against himself, he can't stand.

Jesus first argues against the logic of their accusations; it makes no sense that a kingdom would be divided against itself. Then he addresses the real question: "Where did Jesus get power to do what he can do?"

What's going on in the strong man parable?

The strong man is Satan, his goods have been plundered as demons have been cast out of the bodies of men (the paralytic, the leper, Levi). Shows that Satan must have been bound. The implication is that this must have happened when Jesus was tempted in Mark 1. Jesus was victorious in conquering Satan and winning the right to plunder Satan, free people from his control and draw them to himself. Jesus is binding the strongman (Satan), he is entering his house (area of power) and plundering it (taking his property). One stronger than Satan is here! He draws a contrast between the New King on earth and the old king on earth.

What kind of sins are forgivable? Unforgivable?

"All sins will be forgiven", so that includes any sinful deed done, any blasphemy that can be uttered. What about the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?

According to Mark, that form of blasphemy relates to accusing Jesus of having an unclean spirit – that is, the accusation that Jesus is possessed by Satan. This is unforgivable because it is a sin you will never seek forgiveness for – deciding for the last time that Jesus is not from God.

Jesus is the one who forgives sin, just need to come to him and ask for it. Will the teachers of the law do this?

They reject Jesus, say he's from Satan, they will never go to him for forgiveness. Jesus has reached out to the scribes and the Pharisees – answered their questions, demonstrated truth, healed to show them his authority, even called them to him. Their sin: continually rejecting the answers of God, to the point where they no longer turn to him with their questions. The problem is not that they have asked questions, nor is it that God didn't care enough about them to listen to them, but that they have rejected the answers that came.

Look at the history of Jesus' interaction with the teachers of the law and Pharisees:

2:6-7 -- Questioning in their hearts, Jesus answers and demonstrates his authority

2:16 – Questioning his disciples, Jesus answers with a parable

2:18 – Questioning Jesus, Jesus answers with OT, a parable

3:2 – Watching to accuse, Jesus answers, models, teaches

3:22 – Accusing, say he is Satan. Jesus calls to them, teaches, warns

So what is the unforgivable sin? Have you ever wondered if you've committed it?

It is the process of rejecting the answers of God, hardening one's heart towards God. It is not utterable blasphemy – any blasphemy that it uttered can be repented of and forgiven. Following Jesus is a vector, a direction, series of choices. NOT following him is the same thing. You can't be forgiven if you've chosen against the source of forgiveness.

Family Conflict (3:31-35)

Why do Jesus' mother and brothers come and stand outside?

Sounds like they're embarrassed by him. Maybe people are pressuring them to take care of their crazy sibling and son. They are as blind as the Pharisees before.

What is Jesus' response?

Whoever does the will of God is part of Jesus' family. God wants us to listen to Jesus, hear Jesus, wait on Jesus, do what Jesus says, follow him. He invites us to come on inside, into Jesus' presence. Jesus' family has not done that yet (but at least some of them do, later).

What is the contrast here, with the previous story?

Those who blaspheme the Holy Spirit never have forgiveness – outsiders. Those who do the will of God are part of the family – insiders. Come on inside.

Jesus is forming a new family – his old family is not enough. And as with the new and old wineskins, there is tension. The people in his new family come from all over, even Gentile lands. We have a picture here of a father with his family, not just a king with his subjects.

Application Questions

- What are we to do with the answers we receive from God?
Obey, do his will.
- What happens if we don't act?
Gradual process of rejection, hardening of heart, ending in our not being able to be forgiven because we don't want to be.
- Do we have to worry about accidentally committing the unforgivable sin?
No – it's a process.
- What does this tell us about salvation, membership in God's family?
Salvation is also a process, not an event. It is defined dynamically – those who do the will of God, those who follow Jesus.
- How is Jesus changing your identity?

Some of the questions came from www.bostongrad.org/mark/mark3_4.doc