



‘Now!’ Sermon Series

Sermon #11

Sunday, June 23rd, 2024

‘Preying on Someone to Fall!’

Mark 2:23-3:6

Last week in ‘NOW’ sermon series:

- Last week we were in Mark 2:18-22 as we looked at how Jesus handled the people, influenced by the Pharisees, questioning Him on fasting.
 - I preached a message entitled *‘Break Your Box!’* from *Mark 2:23-3:6*.
 - Last week I asked the question: *How does Jesus show us in this passage that He broke the boxes of religion that the Pharisee’s attempted to put up around Him?*
 - **Point 1: *A Dissapointment Revealed.* (V. 18)**

- **Point 2: *A Deliberate Response.* (V. 19-20)**

- **Point 3: *A Distinct Reason.* (V. 21-22)**

- Based on last week’s message, have you broken any boxes that are in your life?
 - If not, which boxes do you need to make sure that you break in order for the Lord to get maximum glory in your life.

‘Preying on Someone to Fall!’

Mark 2:23-3:6

Sermon in a Sentence:

In this text we can see how the Pharisees were preying on Jesus by their Addiction to following others, an Absence of the facts, Awaiting failure, and their Appeasement is forfeited.

Intro:

- This morning we come to yet another example in Mark’s Gospel of the Pharisees questioning and challenging Jesus deity and Authority.
 - ***What we are going to find in Mark 2:23-3:6 this morning, is that the Pharisees are preying on Jesus.***
 - ***Meaning that they are hunting. They want to see Jesus fall, fail, and ultimately give up.***

- While these pharisees will not see Jesus fall, fail, or give up, they will get to see Jesus die on the Cross. But that, He did so willingly.
- ***There are many things that satan can throw at us in this life to distract and deter us from being able to have a vital relationship with God.***
 - I think some of the most effective tactics that satan can use are found in this text and embodied in the form of the pharisees.
- **Legalism.**
 - **Legalism is often brought out by:**
 - **Seductiveness.**
 - **Nosiness.**
 - **Jealousy.**
- Dr. Daniel Aiken defined legalism as this:

'Legalism is raising to the level of biblical mandate and command what God has neither commanded nor prohibited in His Word. It is taking our traditions and preferences and imposing them on others as an act of spiritual superiority, even though the Bible does not make such practices universally prescriptive. Legalism is characterized by looking for the shortcomings in others rather than in oneself.'
- Legalism is a scary trap that satan can use and will seek to use in your life to keep you from **praying** for others, and start **preying** on others.
 - It's a slippery slope that has become even easier, more attractive, and even more accessible in our culture today with the rise of **social media.**
 - Now, we don't need to blame the nosiness of our culture on social media alone.
 - ***While I didn't experience it, I'm told that folks would stay on the phone lines and listen to other people's phone calls.***
 - In small town America 40 to 60 years ago, it was quite regular for men to get the gossip in the local diner or barbershop, and for ladies to hear it at the nail salon.
 - ***Now, we don't even have to leave our homes, to keep up with what everyone is doing, which can lead to preying.***
- In 2020, Homes.com did a survey on which states had the nosiest neighbors.
 - ***They surveyed 50 people from each state, for a total of 250 people surveyed.***
 - They asked each person to rate their own personal nosiness on a scale of 1-3. 1 being the least, and 3 being super nosy.

- According to them the national average of nosiness rate is **1.42**.
- #1: Nevada- 12.3% over the national average.
- #2: South Carolina-11.8 % over the national average.
- #3: South Dakota-11.8% over the national average.
- #4: Ohio- 9.7% over the national average.
- #5: North Carolina- 9.1% over the national average.
- #6: Kentucky- 8.3% over the national average.
- #7: Louisiana- 7.7% over the national average.
- #8: Indiana- 7% over the national average.
- #9: Virginia- 6.9% over the national average.
- #10: Missouri- 6.8% over the national average.
- ***In this survey, very specific questions were asked of the respondents.***
 - ***The survey also found that one question asked 'do you occasionally peek through your blinds to see what your neighbors are doing?'***
 - ***68% of South Carolinians answered yes to that question. The highest out of any state.***
- While I am not trying to make you feel bad (I'm guilty of being nosy, we all are), I'm trying to let you know that nosiness and curiosity into the lives and habits of others, can become a **gateway** for satan to lead us to preying on others to fall.

- That's exactly what we find in this passage of scripture this morning...

****Read Mark 2:23-3:6****

Question to Ask:

How do the Pharisees give us an example in this passage of what it looks like to prey on someone (Jesus), and looking for His mistakes?

Point 1: *An Addiction to Following Others. (V. 23-24)*

- As I mentioned a few moments ago, social media has made it very easy for people to closely follow the actions of one another.
 - ***Many people are addicted to this, constantly filling up the search bar on how favorite social media app, seeing how much better, or worse, the lives of those around us, are.***
 - Way before the invention of social media, the Pharisees were busy doing this very same thing.
 - ***We are still very early on in Mark's Gospel, and we can see the buildup of how they are closely watching and following Jesus every move.***
 - Just waiting to pounce, and confront Him, at every and any opportunity.
 - ***In order to be able to understand the problem that the Pharisees have this time, we need to think like a first century jew and understand a***

few things about the importance of the sabbath.

- Two practices that the Jews had that separated them from all other nations in the ancient world, were circumcision and the Sabbath.
- **The Sabbath, by definition, would have been from sunset on Friday until Sunset on Saturday.**
 - Scholar James Edwards went on to say that ‘vegetation could not be cut, plucked, or uprooted.’ According to Jewish tradition.
- *The reason that God set the Sabbath day apart in Exodus 20, the fourth commandment, was from God’s example to the people to rest. Which God did on the 7th day of creation.*
 - *According to Ezekiel 20:12, the sabbath was a sign to Israel that they were indeed God’s people.*
 - ‘Moreover, I gave them my Sabbaths, as a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them.’
- **God did not set forth the sabbath to become a point of legalism.**
 - In fact, what Jesus and the disciples do here is not against biblical law.

○ *The Pharisees were upset on the grounds of Jesus and His disciples breaking what they called the Mishnah and Talmud.*

- Which was part of the 3,000 plus laws, rules, and regulations that the pharisees added to the law.
- In this text, there are **3** things we need to point out.
- **The Route. (V. 23a)**
 - ‘One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields,’
 - Due to the roads and advancements our culture has made in the area of transportation, it can be difficult for us to understand why Jesus and His disciples were in a grainfield.
 - JM offers a good reason for this *‘In the ancient world, it was normal for pathways to crisscross fields, so travelers traversed through crops routinely. Roads were scarce, especially in rural places, so travel usually took place on wide paths that stretched from one town to the next, passing through fields and pastures.’*
 - So, it was quite regular for a route like this to be taken.
- **The Reaching. (V. 23b)**
 - ‘and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain.’

- This is the action that obviously infuriated the pharisees.
 - But, according to ***Deuteronomy 23:25***, the disciples were in the clear.
 - ‘If you go into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the ears with your hand, but you shall not put a sickle to your neighbor's standing grain.’
 - ***When looking at Exodus 34:21, it seems that the Pharisees took it to the extreme:***
 - “Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest. In plowing time and in harvest you shall rest.’
 - ***In the eyes of these pharisees, plucking was considered ‘harvesting’.***
 - Another example of something they take to the extreme and add their own twist.
- ***According to the Talmud and Mishnah, (their own laws that they came up with), there were 4 infractions that the disciples would have committed in the minds of these pharisees that we find in this one verse.***
 - ***#1: Reaping.***
 - They picked the grain.
 - ***#2: Sifting.***
 - Removing the husks and shell of the grain.
 - ***#3: Threshing.***
 - Rubbing the heads of grain.
 - ***#4: Winnowing.***
 - Throwing the chaff in the air.
 - ***#5: Preparing.***
 - Then, preparing the grain in order to eat it.
- ***While what the disciples did would have been permissible according to the OT and God’s law, they had to eat, the pharisees are preying.***
 - Grasping at straws just to be able to find anything that they’ve done...
- They found in their reaching for grain, here’s the reaction.
- ***The Reaction. (V. 24)***
 - ‘And the Pharisees were saying to him, “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?”’
 - ***Notice that the pharisees have no care or concern for the hunger or well being of the disciples.***
 - They care more about their own hypocritical system that they had made up...
 - ***People who make a regular habit of preying on others don’t care about well being, but their own satisfaction in seeing others fall.***

- The reason that the Pharisees approached Jesus with the disciples actions, is because He was responsible for their actions since they were His followers.
- ***It's very interesting that the disciples leave out an infraction that the disciples probably were guilty of.***
 - More than likely they had traveled more than 1,999 paces, which is equal to 800 meters.
 - *They were not supposed to travel farther than that on the sabbath.*
 - ***Notice, that the Pharisees leave this detail out, because they were probably guilty of it as well.***
 - Those who love preying on others downfalls, will often exclude their own sins...
- So, we see that the Pharisees are quite addicted to following others, but now Jesus is going to give them a rebuttal.

Point 2: *An Absence of the Facts.* (V. 25-28)

- The pharisees are so focused on what the disciples have done and how they can blame it on Jesus, that they don't even know the facts from the scriptures.
 - ***What we find in these verses is that Jesus' response shows us that the pharisees are absence of the facts of WHO Jesus is, WHAT***

He has come to earth to do, but they are also amiss on the scriptures themselves.

- Jesus' answers are always mind blowing, but here especially.
- There are 2 important things that Jesus does in responding to the absence of facts that the Pharisees display.
- ***Pointing to the Scriptures.* (V. 25-26)**
 - 'And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him:26 how he entered the house of God, in the time of^[a] Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?"
 - In order for Jesus to show them that He is Lord of the sabbath, He is going to pull His answer straight from the scriptures.
 - ***Jesus takes them to 1st Samuel 21:1-6.***
 - This passage of scripture takes place during the life of King David.
 - In that passage, David and his men were in desperate physical need and found themselves very hungry.
 - ***David was seeking to escape Saul who was wanting to kill him.***

- *So David goes to the High priest at Nob and enters the temple.*
 - He asks the priest for bread.
 - *The only bread that was available in the tabernacle would have been the bread of the presence.*
 - ‘And you shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before me regularly.’ Exodus 25:30
 - *Every sabbath 12 loaves of bread were set on the table in the Holy Place, and the priests would then be allowed to eat the bread once it was a week old, but no one else could eat it.*
 - ‘And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place, since it is for him a most holy portion out of the LORD's food offerings, a perpetual due.’ Leviticus 24:9
 - *So, what's Jesus point in referencing this situation with King David?*
 - *God did not want David and his men to starve. God was much more concerned about caring for His servant David and their men.*
 - JM said *‘God did not punish either Ahimelech or David for their actions. He allowed a ceremonial law to be violated for the sake of meeting an urgent human need.*
- 1st Samuel 22:11-18, shows us that Saul is the only one who was angered by this, the very one preying on David.
 - *Another very interesting thing to point out concerning Jesus comparison here, is that He is showing a strong comparison to Himself and David.*
 - Jesus is using a technique in His argument that was often used by the Rabbi's. He's going from the Lesser, to the greater.
 - *David was the anointed King of Israel, if his authority was sufficient for his physical needs to be taken care of, than truly the Son of Man, who came from that line of David, is worthy to allow His disciples to have their physical needs met.*
 - *Proof of His Sovereignty. (V. 27-28)*
 - ‘And he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.²⁸ So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.”
 - Jesus not only pointed to the scriptures in His response, but also gave proof of His Sovereignty.
 - *If the lesser to greater argument with the reference to David wasn't enough for the pharisees to see that Jesus was showing He had authority, He goes a*

step here in giving them proof of His sovereignty.

- I need to be clear here, I do not believe it was God's intention for ceremonies, rituals, and traditions to stand in the way of how we give others mercy, kindness and goodness.
 - ***Don't hang rules and regulations that are just your opinions and not scriptural truth, just so that you can prey on someone else.***
- Verse 27 is interesting.
 - 'And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.'
 - ***Essentially what Jesus is saying here is that the sabbath was meant to bless man.***
 - God gave the example back in Genesis not because He needed the rest, but because He wanted mankind to be able to have a day to rest.
 - ***The sabbath was made for man to rest and enjoy it, not for the sabbath itself to be worshiped.***
 - Dr. Daniel Aiken said ***'Jesus' liberating vision of the sabbath frees us from legalistic constraints instead of binding us with unbearable burdens.'***

- This reminds me of what the Apostle Paul, once a pharisee, said to the Church at Colossae.
 - 'Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. **17** These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.' Colossians 2:16-17
- Verse 28 is not as compelling and striking as it would have been to the original audience of Mark's Gospel.
 - 'So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.'
 - ***Jesus openly and boldly proclaims His deity and divinity.***
 - ***Jesus drops a bombshell on the pharisees that they are not going to be able to recover from.***
- Jesus has the authority, not them.
 - ***All along they were trying to prove and insist that they had the religious piety and power, but it was truly Jesus who did and does.***
 - Jesus elevated Himself over the pharisees, and showed them how absent they were of the facts, and reality.

Point 3: *Awaiting Failure.* (V. 1-2)

- ‘Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. **2** And they watched Jesus,^[a] to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him.’
 - *Now we see that the Pharisees are closely watching Jesus, earlier they were looking for a reason to accuse Him.*
 - Now, they are simply preying on Him further in order to collect evidence to further build their case.
 - They wanted Him dead, they wanted Him gone.
 - *The Pharisees are awaiting failure, but we know that our Lord didn't fail, He's incapable of failure.*
 - Jesus is showing compassion to this man in the synagogue.
 - This is yet another time in Mark's Gospel where Jesus returns to the synagogue to attend a worship service.
 - Yet again, we see Jesus get ready to heal on the sabbath, and the pharisees are just waiting to pounce on Him.
 - I believe there is **1** important thing to draw from the awaiting of failure that we see here:
- *Lurking in the Shadows. (V. 1-2)*

- *Have you ever disliked someone so much that you just wait to see them fall?*
 - Maybe that's by waiting for them to say a bad word or an inappropriate comment in the conversation.
 - Maybe that's looking at their social media posts every day to see something bad posted that you can pounce on.
 - Here, the Pharisees are lurking, in the shadows, to see what He will do next.
- **Word Study**
 - The word ‘withered’ here in the english comes from the greek word **‘Xeraino’-ἐξηραμμένην** which occurs 15 times in the NT.
 - It literally means to dry up, and is usually used in reference to plants.
 - *The context of the word here seems to suggest that the hand was no longer useful, and absent of nerves in the hand.*
- *Which makes what Jesus is about to do that more miraculous and more evidence that He is the messiah!*
 - Here, we see two major limitations. The limitation that this man had in his hand, and the limitations that the pharisees had to see that Jesus was who He said He was.

- So far this morning we've seen the addiction to following others, an absence of the facts, and their awaiting what they think is failure. Lastly we see that their appeasement is going to be forfeited...

Point 4: *Appeasement is Forfeited. (V. 3-6)*

- The pharisees want to be appeased by pinning Jesus down and charging Him with a crime.
 - We will see this continue on and escalate even more until they see Jesus die on the cross.
 - *I'm sure the tension in that service that day was more than we could imagine.*
 - The pharisees are looking at Jesus, waiting to pounce on Him, and verse 5 tells us that Jesus is looking at them.
 - *Talk about drama for a Sunday service!*
 - There are 2 things to point out here as we see that the appeasement of the pharisees is lost, it's forfeited because of how great Jesus is.
 - **No Intimidation. (V. 3-5)**
 - 'And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here." 4 And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. 5 And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the

man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.'

- *All throughout the Gospel accounts, Jesus is not once intimidated by the tactics that the pharisees throw at Him and He is not once intimidated by them.*
 - *Jesus was showing them that He had an opportunity to heal this man and change his life forever.*
 - *The pharisees would rather see this man continue to go on with a withered hand, just so they could keep their rules and rituals.*
 - When Jesus had just told them that HE is Lord of the sabbath.
- *This man with the withered hand was one of God's creations, a human, the pinnacle of His creation.*
 - Jesus chooses to bestow on this man compassion, mercy and kindness.
 - *It's time that we all seek to give others kindness, mercy, and compassion no matter what others may think about it.*
- Notice that Jesus was grieved by the hardness of their heart.
 - *If Jesus grieved over them and their hearts, knowing they didn't believe in*

Him, how much does Jesus grieve over us when we prey on people that are sitting on the same pew as us instead of praying for them...

- Jesus is not intimidated by them...
- **No Transformation. (V. 6)**
 - ‘The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.’
 - **There is no heart change in the pharisees.**
 - Despite what Jesus had said to them, they were still hardened.
 - Just as today there will be people that live here with their hearts hardened to what God may have really wanted to speak to your heart this morning through His Word.
 - **These pharisees are unmoved, untouched, and stone cold when it comes to Jesus.**
 - **Just as people all across Churches in America today will be. Unmoved, untouched, and stone cold.**
 - Yet, claim Christ is their Lord.
 - If Christ is your Lord, then His Word will move you to change, to do things you’ve never done, and to think like you’ve never thought before.

- The herodians were a worldly political group that was in major support of Herod the great and and rome.
 - **We know why the pharisees didn’t like Jesus, but the Herodians didn’t like Him because of His popularity in Rome.**
- The sad truth is, you can be around Jesus all the time. But if Jesus is not IN you, then transformation is impossible.
 - **Is Jesus living inside of you today? Make sure before you leave this place.**

Conclusion:

- **This morning, I think it’s really important before we leave this place that we ask ourselves, have I been preying on people this week or praying for people?**
 - We need to walk closely with the Lord so that He can convict us when we are wrong.
 - **So that we can face our own shortcomings and make them right before the Lord.**
 - Jesus is our authority.
 - **Stop looking over the fence at other Christians, and start looking in your own backyard.**
 - I believe we can see ‘Preying on others to fail’ when we look at:
 - **Point 1: An Addiction to Following Others. (V. 23-24)**
 - **Point 2: An Absence of the Facts. (V. 25-28)**

- **Point 3:** *Awaiting Failure.* (V. 1-2)
- **Point 4:** *Appeasement is Forfeited.* (V. 3-6)