



Series: MARK

HEARTLESS CHRISTIANITY: WHO ARE THE PHARISEES TODAY?

Part 1

By Matthew Black
February 28, 2010

AM Service

Text: Mark 2:1-3:6

Message: 07

“...I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”
(Mark 2:17)

How many people like to play basketball? Did you know there's a difference between enjoying a game and actually knowing how to play it skillfully? If you go anywhere in the world, people like to play games, whether its soccer or checkers or dominoes. Lots of people like watching the Olympic Games lately. People love to play games. Those of us with children love to watch our children play games.

A.W. Tozer was a pastor in Chicago during the 1950s and 60s. Here's something Tozer said, "Most people indeed play at religion as they play at other games." Religion itself being the most universally played game. I hope that's not true among us. Yet I believe there is phariseism in all of us that we need to confront so that we can be more like Jesus.

We want Tabernacle Baptist Church not to be a place to play games, but a place of shelter and security and acceptance for sinners. You need to know that we are a church made up of broken, hurting people on the road to restoration in Jesus Christ. If we don't think we fit that description then we are nothing more than people comparing masks with one another. It's all a show. "Well my mask is better than your mask". No, we are all hurting people. Let's admit it. Let's come clean today.

Today we come to Mark 2 and the first six verses of Mark 3. In our text we have a series of 5 run-ins that Jesus has with the Pharisees. The title of the message this morning is "Heartless Christianity: Who are the Pharisees Today?" Pharisees are busy, busy, busy, but they are not serving God. They are busy criticizing, critiquing, and complaining.

Now this is not a message this morning primarily for unbelievers, but for believers. We are all like Lazarus coming out of the grave with the grave clothes still on—we still have remnants of the old life clinging to us. And part of that old life is legalism and heartless Christianity.

In Mark 2 there is a theme word throughout that keys us in on the issues the Pharisees were concerned about. Jesus is doing His ministry, healing people, not wanting to be at odds with the people he was teaching, but there some people who were spectators, and even more than that. They had set themselves up as judge and jury over Jesus' ministry. They are constantly questioning Jesus' ministry, yet they have no fruit themselves.

Verse 7, "Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?"

Verse 16, "How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?"

Verse 18, "Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?"

Verse 24, "...why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?"

You might ask yourself...

Introduction: Who are these people? Why aren't they doing something for God? Don't they have anything better to do than be critical? Well, let me tell you a bit about the Pharisees.

- A. **Who were the Pharisees?** Pharisees were the major religious group of Jesus' day. There were about six thousand (6000) of them in Jesus' time. The word for Pharisees literally means "separated ones". The Pharisees were committed to a strict adherence to the ceremonial law, like "make sure you wash your hands in this way", "make sure the priests have this color fringes on their garments", and "make sure you don't do these things to break the Sabbath". The ceremonial law was the passion of the Pharisees.
- B. **They invented the Oral Law.** So committed were the Pharisees to not breaking the written ceremonial law, that they established something called the "oral law". These are additional rules that are not from the Bible, but they had added them in an attempt to make sure they did not break the written ceremonial law. For instance God says to "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy", and the Pharisees wrote 600 additional rules governing what is and what is not breaking the Sabbath day. The Pharisees were very focused on this self-invented, outward-focused, legalistic oral law.
- C. **The Scribes were Pharisees too.** You will see the Scribes referred to in the New Testament. They are not a separate religious group. Scribes were a certain type of Pharisee. They were kind of the seminary professors of the day. They were professional scholars.
- D. **They were brilliant and sincere.** You make a mistake if you think the Pharisees were moronic "keystone cops". They were not insincere. They were brilliant minds—some of the most intelligent people of Jesus' day. They were totally committed and zealous to God's Word. They were uncompromising. For instance the Scribes who would have written copies of the Scriptures were so zealous about keeping the fourth commandment, prohibiting taking God's name in vain, that they would take a bath every time they wrote His Name in copying the Scriptures, and they would use a unique pen for each time they wrote it.

They were the committed ones, the defenders of the truth, the separated ones. They refused to compromise. **Yet they could not see themselves clearly.** So there, now we know who the Pharisees are.

The issue is not can we locate and define the Pharisees in Jesus' day. The issue is: can we locate them in our day? No, that's not it either. The issue is this: are we humble enough to search our own hearts for the kind of heartless Christianity the Pharisees practiced?

Before we answer that question, let's pray together.

Prayer for guidance: Dear Father in Heaven, we know you love your children. We know you want all of us to love you. Help us not to ever come to you in a heartless, mindless way. Teach us to love you, and to truly love those around us. Lord, I know this is not something that someone else needs to hear, but that I myself need to hear. Please teach me and teach us all. We ask in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Let's go to Mark 2 and check ourselves to see if we've engaged in any kind of heartless Christianity. God wants your heart. He wants all of you. So as we look at the Pharisees, ask yourself, "Am I like that?" Be honest and willing to change. Ok, let's jump into the first truth about the Pharisees.

I. **The Pharisees**, though intelligent and sincere, were **Blind** (v. 1-13). They do not see themselves clearly. They miss the obvious. **Followers** of Christ on the other hand **Believe**. They have a compassion for people and they believe Jesus is the answer for hurting people. They are constantly wanting and praying for the power of God to come down on them. Pharisees are blind to all that. They don't care too much about people's pain. They care more about how every one dots their I's and crosses their T's more than seeing people changed into the glory of Christ.

A. **For Jesus, people are important, but Pharisees are BLIND to PEOPLE.** The Pharisees would never have chosen Capernaum as a base for ministry. They weren't the right kind of people—there were Gentiles and outcasts in Capernaum. Yet Jesus' ministry base was Peter and Andrew's home right in the poor section of Capernaum. Notice **Mark 2:1**, "And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house."

1. **Jesus is actually at Peter and Andrew's house.** We would probably call it a shack in our day. The Palestinian peasant home of that day would be a very small square building, maybe one or two rooms where all the living, eating, and sleeping took place. Poorer families who couldn't afford the use of an outside barn or cave also shared their homes with their animals. Obviously there was no plumbing or electricity of any kind. It would have had a thatched roof, constructed of reeds and rushes braided together laid over wooden beams and covered with mud and maybe some tiles. But it was definitely not water resistant or airtight. There were a lot of people in this house. Peter's wife and mother-in-law were staying there, his brother Andrew was there, and Jesus was also staying there.
2. **People crowded in on Jesus and He preached the Word to them. Verse 2**, "And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them." Even Christ Himself—God Almighty in human flesh used the very text of Scripture as the basis of all He had to say. Who wouldn't line up to hear Jesus teach the Bible? No wonder the house was full—God was giving a sermon!
3. **On the outside of the crowd, outside the house, a paralyzed man—probably a quadriplegic, was carried by four friends. Verse 3**, "And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four." Since this man could not walk, his friends carried him on a cot to Jesus. Thank God for the friends that bring us to Jesus. They could see clearly that Jesus was the only one that could heal their friend. But they could not get in. The front door was blocked. People were sitting in the windows. Yet, so confident that Jesus was the only one that could help them, they decided to find a way to get to Jesus.

Application: Sometimes we are not like the sick man's friends. Life gets a little busy and a little rough and we make excuses not to come to the prayer meeting or the evening service. That's not what this man's friends did at all. So the door was blocked and all the windows filled with people. It didn't stop them. They said, "We going up to the roof!" **Verse 4a**, "And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press [crowd], they uncovered the roof where he was..."

4. **So, they went UP and on to the roof!** And they somehow removed the thatching and the mud, and maybe some tiles, and they made an opening. They have no power tools—nothing but their bare hands. You can imagine the people inside were not happy about this. Imagine a clump of dirt just hit your head. The room would have been dark with all

the people there, and then all of the sudden a flood of light and dust and falling clumps of tile and dirt. I think there was some serious yelling going on at the guys on the roof.

- I think **Peter** probably had something to say about it all since it was **his house!** And it says in **verse 4b**, “and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.” There may have been pandemonium, but when Jesus saw it, he was impressed with something. It wasn't their love—it wasn't their ingenuity—it wasn't their persistence. It says (**verse 5**), “**When Jesus saw their faith**, he said unto the sick of the palsy, **Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.**” Jesus was impressed with their FAITH. They could SEE spiritually. They got it. Jesus is the most important person in the universe, and we need to do whatever it takes to get to Him!

The paralyzed man's main problem was not his sickness but his sin! And that's what is so striking about all of this. He makes all this trouble to come to Jesus, and Jesus does not heal him at first, but simply says, “Your sins are forgiven”.

But the Scribes are blind to people. They don't care about this man. So **verse 6** says, “But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,”

Notice, there's hardly a place to sit in this tiny one room shack, but the Scribes are sitting down—they are not helping—they don't see that there are real human beings here that are hurting and need help. No, they are sitting down, not serving, not helping, but just there as judge and jury criticizing and reasoning.

So the Scribes were sitting there “reasoning in their hearts, 7 **Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?**” Now they were right to believe that only God can forgive sins. But you see Pharisees are not only blind to the needs of people...

B. Pharisees are BLIND to the PERSON of Jesus. For Followers, Jesus is EVERYTHING!

The Pharisees missed the fact that Jesus is God. He's the Messiah—God in human flesh. They were missing the very obvious truth before them. Remember Jesus had already healed multitudes in the days before this. People were crushing upon Him. But Pharisees are blind, blind, blind. They cannot see when God is at work. We read in **verse 8**, “And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, **Why reason ye these things in your hearts?**”

Explanation: It must have been brutal being around Jesus. At any given moment He would know what you were thinking! That's scary to think He knew everyone's thoughts. But He can do that right now. He knows your thoughts.

And here we are at the beginning of Jesus ministry, and remember they've already tried to kill Him in Nazareth for claiming to be the Messiah. Now He preaches in a second synagogue, this time in Capernaum, and He's doing a miracle. Imagine the anticipation! Here the paralyzed man makes a grand entrance through the roof. There is baited breath. The Scribes want to see this show. They've got front row seats. But Jesus does not want to give a show. He wants to start a WAR!

The guy is lowered down; everyone is waiting to see this man healed. Perhaps there was a moment of anticipation, and then the words come out of Jesus' mouth that really disappointed the Scribes, “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee” (verse 5). What?! No healing!

Do you see what Jesus is doing? He's claiming to be God. The Scribes hate this. And as God, forgiving someone's sins is just as easy as healing someone, and **Jesus can do both (verse 9)**. Which is easier, to forgive sins or to heal? The answer—neither—they are both easier for the Omnipotent God at Whom they were all looking at. But the Scribes were blind to it!

And because they were blind to Jesus...

- C. **They are also BLIND to the Power of God. Verse 10**, "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) 11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. 12 And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion." Imagine in our world, you have Michael J. Fox with Parkinson's disease brought to Jesus. Every one knows him. He walks out of there healed! Everybody's amazed! It doesn't say, but you know by the way this chapter goes, the Scribes are quite furious.

Application: Of course we don't live in Jesus' day. We live in the 21st century. Are you blind to people, maybe because of a difference on a secondary doctrine. In all of our discernment, we tend to broad brush everyone. We must recognize where Jesus is at work. Jesus is not just at work among us. He is at work among some of the Assemblies of God. He's at work among some of the Wesleyans. You might say, "Are you kidding! Those groups have left the faith!" The same could be said about Baptists. There are faithful congregations scattered in places that would surprise you. I think of a Pentecostal Leonard Ravenhill. I think of an A. W. Tozer from the Christian Missionary Alliance. I think of another Pentecostal that God is using mightily—David Wilkerson at Time Square Church in New York City. Listen, I know of some Arminian Mennonites that God is using mightily throughout the prison populations of America. Let's not be blinded to the work that Jesus is doing in the world. You will sit side by side with your brothers and sisters in Christ at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Don't be a blind Pharisee. Yes we need discernment. Perhaps we cannot work together or attend the same church. But do not deny the work of God! It's God who touches and regenerates hearts, and He does it in spite of any one of us, not because of any one of us!

Secondly, not only are Pharisees **blind**, but...

II. **Pharisees**, are inwardly **Boastful**, **Followers** are **Broken** (v. 13-17).

Pharisees think they're righteous. Followers know they are sinful. Pharisees are unteachable and unmoldable. The Pharisees criticized Jesus for healing the paralyzed man because they were blind to Who Jesus was. Now they are going to criticize Jesus because they are so spiritual. They think they have it all together.

Pharisees are zealous and sincere. They truly think they have the truth, and truly they have a portion of it. They may even understand it, but they misapply it. They compare everyone by themselves because they think they have arrived regarding their particular understanding on an issue. And it might be the right understanding. But Pharisees go astray by thinking they are the standard of spirituality.

Illustration (coffee beans): How many of you like your coffee with pure, unground coffee beans? You just get some hot water, and you say "Forget the percolator! I want the pure unground beans!" No way! No body drinks coffee like that. Why? Because it's not coffee. Coffee is what is on the inside of the bean. In order to get that, you have to break it down.

Once it's ground to powder, you can percolate it and have some coffee. God wants you to be broken. He doesn't just want the outside, he wants all of you.

Illustration (Shaun White): Last week at the Olympics, Shaun White won gold in snowboarding on the half pipe. The competition was two runs on the half pipe, and Shaun was so impressive on the first run, that he had the gold in hand. All he had to do was simply snowboard down the pipe and not risk losing his gold. But on his second run was even more impressive than his first. Why? Because he was not there for the love of the gold, but the love of the game. He could have given 10% and still won the gold on the second try, but he gave 110%! For the love of the game!

Jesus doesn't want 90% from us. He wants all of us to come broken and moldable to Him. That is illustrated by this story of Jesus and a tax collector named Matthew.

A. **The mob and Jesus.** So Jesus leaves Peter's house in Capernaum, and makes his way into town. Meanwhile, in town, a tax collector who has probably met Jesus before and heard him teach, sees a great mob coming toward him. We read in **verse 13**, "And he [Jesus] went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them. 14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom [tax booth]". So here is Matthew. He's a tax collector. He's probably the most vile person in all of Capernaum.

Every one would have known Matthew. He would have stood out.

1. Every one had to go to him to pay taxes.
2. He was better dressed than any one.

B. **What is a Tax collector?** Tax collectors were despised above all people, because they would have had to purchase the right to collect taxes from their fellow Jews for he enemy Roman Empire. If the tax was 20% and they could collect 30%, they kept the remainder. So he's like the scum of the earth.

C. **Introducing...Matthew's Posse.** He would have had a posse with him—sinners of all sorts. Thugs who would do Matthew's bidding if people didn't pay up. Prostitutes were also well known to be around this crowd. You can imagine Matthew as a man who was filthy rich, with bad breath, bad habits, bad friends, and a very bad, bad reputation. He extorted people every day for a living. He was legally a thief. He was excommunicated by the synagogue, rejected by his family, and despised by his country. But there was one place of shelter that Matthew could go. There was one person on earth that loved Matthew. It was Jesus. Matthew probably would never have looked for Jesus. He would have been too ashamed. So Jesus went looking for him.

Verse 14, "And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom [tax booth], and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him."

D. **A Farewell Party at Matthew's House.** So Matthew follows Jesus. He invites the Lord to his house, and it ends up being like a farewell party for Matthew. All of Matthew's friends are there. The whole posse. **Verse 15**, "And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him." At Matthew's house in Capernaum, there are all the notorious people of the day. So all the rejects of society are gathered at Matthew's house. And Jesus took them in.

Application: No matter how much of a reject you might feel to be today, there is a shelter in the storm for you. There is an embrace that is stronger than a mother's love. There is a Saviour that will take you in as His own. Rejects are welcome with Christ.

The bottom line is there were a lot of sinners in the house, and the Pharisees couldn't handle it. So these proud Pharisees saw Jesus with the sinners. **Verse 16**, "And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, **How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?**" You see these proud Pharisees were not helping these needy, hurting people. But NO, they were too busy complaining. So listen to Jesus in **verse 17a**, "When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick". When do you go to the doctor? When you are well? When you are sleeping perfectly? No. When? **When you are sick**. Our Lord makes a simple yet profound point. **Verse 17b**, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance".

The Bible says "There is none righteous, no not one" (**Romans 3:10**). Jesus says "I can't help people who don't think they need me". He can only help people who know that they're sinful. **You can't have what Jesus offers until you know you need it**. Is that true or false? True. Not only is that true at conversion; it's true at every point of spiritual growth.

We can be broken at conversion, but there's a need for brokenness after conversion. We need to be in Jesus' mighty presence every hour. How is it that we can get on the other side of the cross and think of ourselves as more righteous than others? How can we think that our issues are the standard of spirituality? But listen, saints, we've got to constantly combat an inflated, elevated view of ourselves! The heart of phariseism is we think of ourselves as the standard.

Let's destroy a myth this morning: The closer I get to God the more spiritual I feel. You may think, if I can just get close to God, I'll have it all together. I'll feel so clean, and so spiritual, and so pure. You may even be comparing yourself with others, and saying, when I get close to God, I'll feel as pure and holy as so and so. Well, that's all a myth. As you get closer to God, you don't feel more spiritual.

Here's the truth: the closer you get to God the more unspiritual and sinful you feel—the more aware you are of your own sinfulness. You see the essence of phariseism is that I begin to think of myself as spiritual, as the guide and the shepherd of everyone. A Pharisee thinks they are always right, and they set themselves up as judge and jury of all people. They are the standard.

A follower of Christ is just the opposite. They think: why am I of all people here? Who am I but a child? How is it that God has saved "such a worm as I"? Perhaps you've always thought that when you get to God you feel spiritual. No, the Scripture is clear.

1. Think of **Abraham**. **Genesis 18:27**, when he meets God he says, "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which *am but* dust and ashes." He met with God and he wasn't feeling very spiritual.
2. Think of **Isaiah**. When he God close to God, he said, "Woe is me, I am undone, I am a man of unclean lips" (**Isaiah 6:5**).
3. When **Peter** got close to Christ he, "fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (**Luke 5:8**). Now this was when Peter was a baby Christian, but we come to the book of Revelation, and we see John.

4. What happens when **John** gets close to Christ? He's not a baby Christian, but a mature Christian on the isle of Patmos. He's probably never been closer to the Lord. But we read in **Revelation 1:17a** he sees the risen Christ and what is his response? "I fell at his feet as dead." But Jesus doesn't leave us there. Look at Jesus' compassion—**1:17b**, "And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last".

The closer we get to God, the more aware we are of our own sinfulness.

Someone said it this way,

"You can't read the writings of Einstein and not feel a little stupid. And you can't stand at the base of a great mountain and not feel small. And you can't kneel at the feet of the Savior, the pure, holy, righteous one and not be overcome by a sense of your own sinfulness."

Pharisees have don't have this sense of sin. Followers do. But I will tell you, it is that sense of sinfulness that drives us to Jesus for His forgiveness, and His love.

Our vision at Tabernacle is that this would be a place—not to put on another mask and compare your mask with someone else's mask of false expectations. We want Tabernacle to be a place where you come and take the mask off. It's a place where you can come and say, "I'm really hurting today". I'm a Christian, and I'm struggling with an addiction." I'm confused about life. Life hurts! Can you help me? Can you help? Is there mercy for me? Yes there is mercy for you. Be in awe of the holiness of Christ and marvel at the fact that you are the apple of his eye. You with all your struggles and warts and all. He wants you. He loves you.

Conclusion (Illus. Alfred Nobel): Followers want to change. They are constantly going to Jesus to start over. There was a man who also wanted to start over. His life it seemed was a disaster. Perhaps you've heard about the Swedish chemist Alfred Nobel. Alfred Nobel woke up one morning in the late 1800s, and he picked up a newspaper and turned to the obituary section. To his great shock and dismay, there was an obituary of his own life as the lead article on the obituary page. This is a true story. He read, "Alfred Nobel died yesterday..." but of course Alfred Nobel was very much alive. The paper had a mistake. A relative had died, and they got the wrong information and thought it was him.

Well, the obituary said that Alfred Nobel was the inventor of dynamite. It had been used to kill more people in war than had ever been experienced before. And the obituary went on to say, "Alfred Nobel is singularly responsible for the death of more people than any other living human being". By the invention of dynamite he had become extremely wealthy.

He read that about his own life, and Alfred Nobel was broken hearted. He took the newspaper's mistake to be an opportunity from God to take a different path. He said that he didn't want to be known for creating greater effectiveness in war and killing people. And so he established something called "The Nobel Peace Prize" for writers and scientists who make advancements in the establishment of peace.

What's the point? What would your obituary say were it to be written today from God's point of view? Would it say that you are blind or boastful? That or that you see yourself as the standard of spirituality? Or would it say that you welcomed people into the Body of Christ. Would it say that you loved sinners and saw yourself as the least of all the saints? Would it say you were just a spectator, on the sidelines criticizing those who serve? Or would it say that you were a servant of Christ, encouraging those around you and covering all the faults and failures of the saints with love?

Series: **MARK**

HEARTLESS CHRISTIANITY: WHO ARE THE PHARISEES TODAY?

Part 2

“...I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” (Mark 2:17)

Games are lots of fun and can bond us together. But when we bring games into our walk with God, we can hurt ourselves and hurt people. Church ought not to be a costume party where we bring our masks and I compare my mask with yours. Church ought to be the place where we can take our mask off and learn to live without masks.

This morning we learned that Pharisees are blind and boastful.

Thirdly, not only are Pharisees **blind** and **not broken**, but...

III. **Pharisees**, are **Bound** by ritual (v. 18-22) instead of **Blessed** by their Relationship with Christ. Pharisees hold strongly to things that are certainly lawful for everyone, but are forced on everyone as if they are Gospel.

It's not wrong to fast. Fasting is a voluntary way to heighten your hunger for God by withholding yourself from food or something else you enjoy. But the Pharisees wanted everyone to hold to the ritual. Listen, we have all formed certain rituals that bring us closer to Christ. But it's not the ritual that matters, but our relationship with Christ.

Verse 18, “And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, **Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?**” What's the answer? Well Jesus could have told them that God doesn't require fasting. Fasting was not required except for once a year on the Day of Atonement, but Pharisees were fasting once a week. Then it went to twice a week—on **Mondays** and **Thursdays**.

So Jesus basically says—for my followers, it's not about the ritual, but about their relationship with me. The only reason for fasting is because you are sad that I'm not fully in the place I'm supposed to be in your life! Rituals are great if they lead you to a deeper walk with Jesus. But it's not about the rituals! It's about each day getting something new and fresh from Jesus.

Jesus gives three great examples to explain the point.

A. **First he says, “Are the Bride and her attendants supposed to fast on the wedding day?” Verse 19-20**, “And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.”

Illustration: Imagine we are at Luis and Veronica's wedding. And Luis looks over at Veronica during the meal time, and every one is celebrating, but Veronica is just sitting there solemn, and staring at her glass of water. There's no food. She's not eating.

Luis says, “What's wrong honey? Is something wrong with the food? Is it too cold?”

"No".

"Should I have them bring you out a new plate?"

"No."

"Well then what's wrong?"

"I'm fasting."

"What? Why would you fast today? It's the greatest day of our lives!"

"Well, I know today is a happy day, but I know we are going to have some hard times in the future, and I'm just preparing myself for them?"

"What?"

And that's exactly what Jesus is trying to say. It's all about the Bridegroom. It's all about Jesus. How could you possibly be more concerned about a RITUAL than your RELATIONSHIP WITH ME?

They must not have gotten it, so Jesus gives two more illustrations.

B. Second, He says, "If you need to repair an old pair of jeans, don't cut the patch from your new suit" Verse 21, "No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse."

What happens is the new cloth shrinks, and the tear is made worse.

C. Third, he says similarly in verse 22, don't put new fresh wine in old dry wineskins. "And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles".

If you put the new stuff into the old dry wineskin, the wineskin will explode. You need something flexible!

We need to be flexible like new clothing, not brittle old rags. We need to be flexible, like a new wineskin that can stretch!

What was Jesus' point? Rituals are not what we need. Rituals are not the sum of our walk with God. We come to church we read the Bible, we pray, etc. But we need NEW, FRESH moves of Christ in our life each day. You've got to be flexible and growing and changing.

Pharisees like their rituals. They like the way "we've always done it". The Pharisees of old said in **verse 18, "Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?"** I'd like to try and think of some questions Pharisees today would ask.

1. "Why do you read new translations of the Bible? WHY??" The answer—because I want to experience Jesus Christ anew and afresh, and a new translation helps me

to understand. If you can't understand what you're reading you can't get closer to Jesus. The KJV is probably the best translation ever produced in the English language. But the language is outdated. We want to encounter Jesus. What we've always done does not help us if it doesn't bring us to Jesus.

Here's another question...

2. "Why does that person listen to that kind of music?" The answer—because it brings him or her to Jesus. Now don't get me wrong. There's plenty of worldly music that you need to stay away from. But I'm not the Holy Spirit. You probably all have different music standards in your walk with Christ. We have a very conservative music style here in the church for two reasons.
 - One, it's easier to sing. We are gathered to sing as a congregation.
 - Two, we don't want to offend a weaker brother, so we are always going to want a conservative style of music in our worship.

But you make a big mistake in thinking that someone is spiritual based on your perception of what is pleasing to God in music. Be very careful in that. I can think of a contemporary Christian music guy from the 80s by the name of Keith Green. He was saved out of the drug culture, and when he came to know Christ he began to write powerful lyrics for the Lord. We probably wouldn't appreciate the style they were written in, but there is no doubt in any of his music that He loved the Lord.

He didn't charge for his music. And all the money that poured in he gave away. He evangelized the riff raff of the city where he lived, purchased houses for them and disciplined these people into churches. He died before he was 30 years old. Leonard Ravenhill hooked up with Keith Green before he died. Ravenhill and Tozer were great friends and really were cut out of the same cloth. Ravenhill took many of the hundreds of young people that were coming to Christ through Keith Green's ministry and helped disciple them and form them into churches.

What I'm saying is don't judge people by your standard of spirituality. We need to have a very literal Bible translation, we need to have music that is theologically powerful and practical to our lives, but be careful not to put more emphasis on the ritual than on your relationship with Christ.

3. We could talk about pants on women. We could talk about ties at the services.
4. We could talk about your view of election and predestination.

"Why don't you believe the same as we do on election and predestination?" Hey, I want you to know election is important. But it is not essential to being saved. Ask Wesley and Tozer and Ravenhill. Did God use these men? Did they disagree with our doctrinal statement on election? Yes!

There is a spirit of judging and testing constantly among Pharisees. They can never rest. They have to make the whole world right. They miss the obvious essentials of Christianity, and camp out on the non-essentials. Why is that? Because they have a spirit of pride.

If you think you are the standard, and God can't save outside of your stratosphere, then you might be a Pharisee. God can save whoever He wants to whenever He wants to, and He can use whomever He wants to in doing it.

Some say, "You must believe like I do on election or any of the non-essentials" or you're not a true church or a true Christian. Tell that to Tozer and Ravenhill. Tell that to John Wesley. Tell that to D. L. Moody. How we understand or articulate the miracle of conversion is not decisive as to where we spend our eternity. How someone crosses their Ts and dots there "I"s on the mystery of a miracle is not what is most important. What is most important is that a person is born again.

If I were to come across a humble broken brother who believes a bit differently than you on non-essentials—let's say a Mennonite in an airport. If my first thought is, *what is this guy's position on the doctrines of grace*, then I've got some Pharisaical thinking going on. Our first thought ought to be, this brother or sister needs some encouragement. Let's pray with him. Or maybe, let's take the terminals and evangelize together! If someone has a broken, humble, contrite heart, I'm going to have fellowship with them, because Jesus is Lord in their life.

It's not the **rituals** we have but the **relationship** with have with Jesus Christ.

IV. **Pharisees**, are not **Big Picture** people (v. 23-3:6).

A. Pharisees cared more about the Sabbath than hungry people.

23 And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. 24 And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, **why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?** 25 And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? 26 How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? 27 And he said unto them, **The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:** 28 Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath". The Sabbath was just a way for man to love God and love his neighbor better. We are to use it to know God and love our neighbor. It's all about worshipping God and fellowshiping with the brothers.

B. Pharisees cared more about the Sabbath than hurting people.

3:1-6, "And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. 2 And **they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him.** 3 And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. 4 And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. 5 And when he had **looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts,** he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched *it* out: and his hand was restored whole as the other. 6 And the Pharisees went forth, and **straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.**"

We can be so consumed about outward standards, that we miss that the big picture is people growing and changing in Jesus Christ.

Pharisees have a **hard time seeing the big picture**, because they are so concerned about one little **pet issue**. They usually go far beyond the law of God to the hurt and detriment of people. Let's remember that God is in this to save people, and we have to be very careful how we come across. Let's not reduce Christianity to preserving a bunch of culture norms. Christianity is Christ. Look at what Christ is doing across the spectrum. They may not have the name "Baptist" or "Fundamentalist" or "Doctrines of Grace". We don't need those labels.

Let's be about Christ and His Word and His Spirit. We don't need to be known primarily by a small segment of Christianity. By this man or by that man. Men and movements can die! Who cares about them. Let's cling to Christ! Let's see the big picture.

Conclusion: We are all broken and beat up people. We are all hurting. We are all hungry for God. We must not take the place of the Holy Spirit for people. We need to be looking for Christ, not imposing our rituals on people. Let's encourage one another. I don't want to see your mask. I want you to take your mask off. I want you to feel safe.

I want Tabernacle to be a place where the masks come off, and we love each other here. Let's make TBC a "No Mask Zone". No games with God, only believing, broken people who are bound to Christ and who see the big picture!