



1

(Title Slide)

TO PROVOKE A RESPONSE

2

Acts 26:14 (ESV) - And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

-- Most of us would have a hard time if I brought a cattle prod to services . . . and used them to goad you into action.

-- We usually don't feel very comfortable when we are being goaded, prodded, provoked.

-- Most of us stay away for environments or people who make us feel that way.

**-- But the sad thing is, that means we will stay away
from Jesus . . . the ultimate provocateur.**

TR: In Mark . . .

2:1 - 3:6
Five Controversies

3

. . . READ SLIDE . . . the controversies show us that Jesus is an agitator.

TR: Last week we saw from the first two controversies that the big question is still the big question today . . .

WHO IS THIS JESUS?

He is the One with . . .

- **Authority to Forgive**
- **Authority to Call Sinners**

4

READ SLIDE

-- We saw that the controversy revolved around His authority to forgive sin, which was a claim to be equal with God . . .

-- . . . and to call sinners, like the tax collector Levi.

TR: Mark continues pushing us with great pace through three more controversies.

Mark 2:18

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?"

ESV

5

READ SLIDE (Highlight)

- Pharisees did not have "disciples" but those who followed their teaching and perspective.
- John was more of an ascetic, which many people believe has the appearance of wisdom, as Paul says in Colossians 2:23/

TR: Perhaps folks had witnessed the feast atmosphere of Levi's dinner party and wondered why the difference, so they asked . . .

Mark 2:18

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?**"

ESV

6

READ SLIDE (Highlight)

- Fasting was only required on Yom Kippur, the day of atonement
- According to Zechariah, there seem to be a number of other fasts that had become a regular part of the calendar for many.
- The Pharisees, not to be outdone in being separated and holy, fasted every, what we would call, Monday and Thursday.

TR: This seems to be a question about what TRUE PIETY

looks like and acts like. Jesus responds to their question . . . 6

Mark 2:19-20

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. ²⁰The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.”

ESV

7

READ SLIDE

- Jesus suggests that He is the bridegroom.
- The OT used the imagery of the bridegroom for God but never directly for Messiah, yet Jesus rightly takes it to himself.
- Jesus changes the issue from fasting to His presence with them.

TR: There would not always be feasting . . .

Mark 2:19-20

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. ²⁰The days will come **when the bridegroom is taken away** from them, and then they will fast in that day.”

ESV

8

READ SLIDE (verse 20)

-- [taken away] has a tone of violence, but it is doubtful anyone, but Jesus, would have understood that it was pointing forward to His death.

-- Some note that “that day” is singular, perhaps pointing to Good Friday.

TR: Weddings were times of new clothes and flowing wine. Perhaps that is why Jesus provokes things further with two images.

Mark 2:21

“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.”

ESV

9

READ SLIDE

TR: We don't patch clothes much . . . or we buy them to look like they are patched . . . but . . .



10

cf. Kathy's mom sewing jeans (dungarees) but with patches from other old pants.

-- new material would have been expensive and would have been wasted and harmful to the old garment that needed patching.

TR: New marriage, new material, and now new wine.

Mark 2:22

“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.**”

ESV

11

READ SLIDE

TR: No one would use an old wineskin . . .



- . . . wineskins often were made from the hide of a goat.**
- Would get dry and brittle and not have the flexibility to deal with the fermenting grape juice.**
- These two images together: The new, unshrunk cloth and the new, still fermenting wine should not be just put together with the old.**
- Jesus came proclaiming “the time is fulfilled; the Kingdom of God is at hand.”**
- He was bringing in something new, not just an adjustment to the old.**

TR: Note how Jesus changed the focus. These 12 unknown questioners were headed down one path, but the Bridegroom uses a cattle prod and goads them to consider . . .

WHO IS THIS JESUS?

He is the Provoker Who . . .

- **redefines piety as the
Bridegroom Who brings “new”**

13

READ SLIDE

-- “The Pharisees had assumed that the way to hasten and prepare for the coming of the new age was through stricter adherence to the old covenant.” (Ben Witherington)

-- Cf. we can easily forget that the main thing . . . that which brings true joy . . . is the presence of Jesus.

-- Whether in small groups, in a tent, in a building, social distancing, with masks, with loud music or quiet music . . . what really defines true piety . . .

-- . . .true devoted holiness . . . is the presence of the

Bridegroom.

13

**TR: Mark continues to show how Jesus is the
Provoker, agitating controversy . . . verse 23 . . .**

Mark 2:23-24

One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. ²⁴And the Pharisees were saying to him, **“Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?”**

ESV

14

READ SLIDE

TR: What was going on?



15

Gleaning from the edge of fields was permitted by the Law (see Deut 23:25).

-- Reaping was work that was forbidden on the Sabbath.

-- It would have been an interpretive question of whether what the disciples did was truly reaping.

-- Their “traveling” would also have been suspect.

TR: Jesus responds by going back to what we call 1 Samuel 21

Mark 2:25-26

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: ²⁶how he entered the house of God, in the time of 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?"

ESV

16

READ SLIDE

- The reference back to David is found in 1 Samuel 21:1-6.
- The priest according to 1 Samuel was Abiathar's father, Ahimelech.
- It could be that Abiathar's prominence was used as a "marker" where to find the account in the scroll.
- Or, "in the time of Abiathar" could refer to the approximate time he was high priest.

TR: SAME SLIDE

Mark 2:25-26

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: ²⁶how he entered the house of God, in the time of 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?"

ESV

17

SAME SLIDE

-- The 12 loaves of bread on the table in the Tabernacle would be replaced each Sabbath.

-- Though David and his men were "clean," it certainly broke with the directive that the bread was for the priests.

-- It either was a violation of the letter of the law in a time of need, or a violation of the assumed "letter" of the law.

TR: Jesus then turns from this example of when the

**letter of the Law was bent to allow for a higher¹⁷
conflicting value, the basic needs of David and his
men, to be met.**

And (Jesus) said to them, **“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.** ²⁸So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.”

ESV

READ SLIDE (v. 27)

- Jesus captures what the original intention of the Sabbath was . . . a time of rest, renewal, and refreshment (Ex. 23:12; Deut. 5:14).
- The Sabbath was not created to keep the basic needs of people from being met. (Bock)
- Torah (Law of Moses) → Oral Torah → Misnah → Gemar → Talmud (includes Misnah and Gemar).
- There is great danger when we treat what follows the → and especially a number of → as absolute (like the actual Word of God itself).

TR: Jesus, the provocateur is not just content to go back to the original intent of the Sabbath, but with His ruling He declares . . .

Mark 2:27-28

And (Jesus) said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. **28So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.**”

ESV

19

READ SLIDE (v. 28)

- Jesus moves beyond the question of Sabbath rules to **Who He is . . . the Lord of the Sabbath.**
- This may be a comment by Mark that helps us understand the point Jesus was provoking the hearers (and readers) to consider.

TR: Who is this Jesus? That’s the big controversy of their day and still our day, no matter what our news feeds say.

WHO IS THIS JESUS?

He is the Provoker Who . . .

- **redefines piety as the Bridegroom Who brings “new”**
- **as Son of Man rules as Lord of the Sabbath**

20

READ SLIDE

- **As we try to understand the meaning of the Bible, we find ourselves pushed back to Jesus.**
- **We do not follow doctrines but Jesus.**
- **Yet it is Jesus Who affirmed the Hebrew Scriptures of the Law, Prophets and Writings.**
- **It is Jesus who promised the Apostles that the Spirit would bring things to their minds . . . inspiring the New Testament.**
- **In a day of arguments about authority, Jesus provokes the greatest controversy by claiming to be Lord . . .**

-- . . . even over the most important expression of holiness for the Jewish people.

TR: Jesus turns people's questions into a goad to consider, "Who is this Jesus?" In the 5th controversy He initiates.

Mark 3:1-2

Again (Jesus) entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. ²And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, **so that they might accuse him.**

ESV

21

READ SLIDE

- How hard it is when people are not listening to you or watching you with the judgment of charity.
- This was the judgment of suspicion and accusation.

TR: The man . . .



**. . . with the withered, dried-out hand was there.
-- He was in the synagogue, but his deformity would
have kept him from Temple worship.
-- The man wasn't asking for healing. Jesus could have
healed him on another day.**

TR: Jesus provokes the controversy when He said . . .

Mark 3:3-4

And (Jesus) said to the man with the withered hand, **“Come here.”**

⁴And 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.

ESV

23

READ SLIDE (verse 3)

-- He then turns the tables and asks the question . . . giving only two options and thereby “trapping” these accusers.

-- The Oral Torah considered it work to heal on the Sabbath, if the situation were not life threatening.

TR: The question . . .

Mark 3:3-4

And (Jesus) said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here."

⁴And 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.

ESV

24

- . . . Jesus' question is not just about the original intention of the Sabbath ("to do good") . . .
 - . . . but also exposing their hypocrisy in opposing Him for breaking the Sabbath "to save a life," . . .
 - when they will go out on the same Sabbath to plan "to kill" Him.
 - Even as the demons have to fall silent at the command of Jesus, now His enemies remain mute.
- TR: When no response is forthcoming . . .

Mark 3:5

And (Jesus) 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.

ESV

25

READ SLIDE (through "hardness of heart")

- The verb tenses indicate that Jesus anger was extremely strong but momentary (aorist) but His sadness, even grief was continuous (present tense).**
- [hardness of heart] = their perceptions had become "rigid and stubborn" (Hooker), dulled, calloused.**
- They evidenced a "mental obtuseness and obduracy" (Witherington).**
- The same is said of the disciples in Mark 6:52, 8:1.**

TR: Angry at their sin and yet grieved that they are

trapped by it, Jesus says to the man . . .

25

Mark 3:5

And (Jesus) 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.

ESV

26

READ SLIDE (Stretch out . . .)

- In reality Jesus does no work, just speaks a command.**
- the man doesn't do any work either.**
- But the rigidity of hearts had allowed people to make absolute expositions and commentary and their logical connections . . . but miss the point.**

TR: Note again that the contrast Jesus makes is between saving a life and killing.

Mark 3:6

The **Pharisees** went out and immediately held counsel with the **Herodians** against him, how to destroy him.

ESV

27

It was a sin to do harm on the Sabbath. It was sin to commit murder.

-- It was sin to plan to destroy another person.

-- Strange bedfellows – [Herodians] = supporters of Herod, possibly Sadducees, messing with our relationship with Rome

-- [Pharisees] = strict separationists, messing with our interpretations

TR: Who is the Jesus?

WHO IS THIS JESUS?

He is the Provoker Who . . .

- **redefines piety as the Bridegroom Who brings “new”**
- **as Son of Man rules as Lord of the Sabbath**
- **with anger & grief exposes the hardness of hearts**

28

READ SLIDE

- **EX: We are no different when we argue about social distancing and masks and political rights . . .**
- **. . . and at the same time manifest the fruits of the flesh, like enmity, strife, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions and divisions.**
- **Check out Galatians 5 for the complete list that is in contrast to the fruit of the Spirit.**
- **We are warned to stop biting and devouring one another, lest we consume one another.**

**TR: Jesus is the great provoker, the One Who goads
us. Who is He?**

WHO IS THIS JESUS?

He is the One

- **God, with Authority to Forgive**
- **The Doctor who calls Sinners**
- **The Bridegroom brings “New”**
- **The Lord of the Sabbath**

29

READ SLIDE

He is the One Who sees our hearts.

HOW IS JESUS PROVOKING YOU TODAY?