

Many years ago an East Texas farm boy struck it rich. A huge deposit of oil and gas was discovered on his land. One day he traveled to New York to meet with a high-powered stock-broker. The broker took the farm boy to Wall St. to show him the eight city blocks that mark the center of the financial universe. As they walked along the street the farmer suddenly stopped and said, “Wait.” He slowly moved toward a planter then quickly reached in and pulled out a cricket. The broker said, “That’s amazing. How could you possibly hear a cricket with all this city noise?” The farmer dug into his pocket and pulled out a handful of loose change. He said, “Watch this.” He dropped the coins on the sidewalk and everyone stopped to look. He said, “See. What you hear depends on what you have been trained to listen for.”

All of us carry within us preconceived notions about how life works. These presuppositions filter information so that we can make decisions consistent with our values. In our passage today Jesus is training His followers to hear His voice so that their actions will be consistent with His values. A follower of Jesus listens to His voice over all the competing voices screaming for our attention. A follower of Jesus listens before he/she leaps.

Mark combines five rapid-fire stories that contrast the growing popularity of Jesus among the people and the growing opposition to Jesus by the religious professionals. In each of these vignettes Jesus confronts the prevailing religious culture. These stories appear grouped together to show that those who follow Jesus will encounter opposition. The TV series A.D. portrays this very clearly. In spite of opposition however, a follower of Jesus values the words of Jesus over the rules of men.

I. True followers hear the groans of a broken world. 2:1-12. Jesus sees past this man’s immediate problem to his deepest need. Conventional wisdom says our greatest need is \_\_\_\_\_? Education, health care, jobs, money? Jesus says our deepest need is to be reconciled to God. No one is truly free until they know their sins are forgiven.

This is another unmistakable claim to deity. The religious leaders are correct when they ask, “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” The answer, “No one.” Only “the Son of Man” has the authority to forgive sin. The title, “Son of Man” is found 81x in the gospels. Jesus reaches back into the OT and stakes His claim to the divine heavenly figure who will receive an everlasting kingdom.

“I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.” Dan. 7:13-14

II. True followers are comfortable in the presence of the irreligious. 2:13-17. In the second vignette Jesus calls Levi or Matthew to follow him and follows him home to party with some of Matthew’s friends. Jesus freely associated with sinners. This was not

“appropriate behavior” for a rabbi. But Jesus wasn’t interested in conforming to religious convention. He came to comfort the afflicted but he also afflicted the comfortable. He confronts the Pharisee in all of us. If your Jesus has been redefined to fit in with your culture then you are not following Jesus. We all have a tendency to create God in our own image. As author Ann Lamott points out, “You can safely assume you've created God in your own image when it turns out that God hates all the same people you do.”

“Sinners” was code for those who did not follow the strict rules of the Pharisees. In their judgment of “sinners” the Pharisees were blind to their own sin. A Pharisee says man’s biggest problem is “them.” Jesus tells me my biggest problem is me.

III. True followers demonstrate the gladness of the gospel over the rules of religion.

Jesus ignored the rules about fasting...2:18-22. This third vignette exposes the problem of wineskins. If you put new wine into an old wineskin the new wine will expand as it ferments bursting the old wineskin and ruining the wine and the wineskin. If you put a patch of new material on an old garment the patch will shrink when it is washed pulling away from the old material ruining the garment. Jesus is referring to the confusion between form and function. When Fellowship began there were certain “acceptable forms” of a worship. The people who started Fellowship were concerned that those forms often obscured the message. They sang songs they didn’t understand. They listened to sermons that answered questions no one was asking. They signed agreements they didn’t believe in. So this church began as a reformation of sorts. Gene Getz sat on a stool and taught. Sacred organ music was replaced by a worship band. Suits and dresses were replaced by jeans and shorts. Priority was given to the message. Forms were secondary. But now those forms are becoming old wineskins once again. That’s why we should always question our forms. **Take the Reveal survey...**

If you try to add the good news of the gospel to old religious forms you will ruin both.

Jesus ignored the rules about the Sabbath...2:23-3:6. In the fourth and fifth vignettes Jesus demonstrates His authority over the ceremonial aspects of the Law. The Pharisees’ narrow interpretation of the Law blurred God’s intention. The spirit of the Law in respect to human need took priority over its ceremonial regulations.

If you want to get to the bottom of your value system just pay close attention to what makes you mad. The Pharisees were furious. Why? Because in rejecting their rules in such a public way Jesus made them look bad. They valued their status and their ability to control the system that ensured their status. Jesus was a threat. But Jesus was mad too...3:5. A follower of Jesus gets angry at the same things that anger Jesus. Jesus was angry because the value of men and women created in the image of God had been diminished. What makes you mad?

A follower of Jesus values the words of God over the traditions of men. The gospel of Jesus Christ is an offense to both religion and non-religion. The section ends with an alliance between the Pharisees and the Herodians. The Pharisees represent conservatives. They take the traditional approach of moral conformity. The Herodians are the

progressives. They take the approach that whatever is right for you is right for you. Both of these approaches are antithetical to the gospel. If you listen to the conservatives they will say, “Those who keep the rules are in and those who break the rules are out.” If you listen to the progressives they will say, “Those who are open-minded are in and those who are judgmental are out.” The gospel says, “Those who are humble are in and those who are proud are out. Those who are made righteous by Christ are in and those who are self-righteous are out.”

What voices are you listening to? Your parents? Your peers? Your professors? The answer to this question is profoundly important. It is one of the first questions asked of Adam after He disobeyed God and brought sin into the world. “Who told you you were naked?” Whose voice are you listening to? The interruption between God and man was the result of listening to the wrong voice. At the end of the day there is only one voice that truly matters. So how can I learn to listen to Jesus?

**1. Listen objectively.** He has spoken. Every time I pick up the Bible I hear His voice. So, “Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” If you want God’s perspective on any issue this is the place to start.

**2. Listen subjectively.** The Holy Spirit is our teacher. Jesus told His original disciples, “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” John 14:25-26. “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.” John 16:13. If you are a follower of Christ you have this same Holy Spirit within you to help you and guide you in the truth. But we have to learn to listen.

Aaron and Melissa Klein own a bakery in Oregon. When a lesbian couple asked them to bake a cake for their same-sex wedding the Klein’s refused. So they are being threatened with a \$135,000 fine and they could lose their business and even their home.

Jack Phillips owns Masterpiece Cakeshop in Lakewood, Colorado. When two gay men ordered a cake for their upcoming wedding reception, Phillips refused. He informed them that because of his religious beliefs the store’s policy was to deny service to customers who wished to order baked goods to celebrate a same-sex wedding. What would you do?

The Pharisee says, “I would never bake that cake. I would be supporting an event that defiles the sanctity of marriage.” What do you say to the divorced? What do you say to the 77 percent of Christian men between the ages of 18 and 30 who view pornography at least monthly? Or the 36 percent who look at it at least once a day?

The Herodian says, “I would bake that cake. They can live any way they want...as long as their not hurting anyone. Besides, people are more important than rules.” Who is right? Would you like me to give you the answer? Here it is: LISTEN TO JESUS.