

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church

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Sermon Title: Jesus Delighted in Breaking Man's Rules, Mark 2:13-22

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INTRODUCTION: Today I want to talk to you about how Jesus delighted in breaking man's rules. Jesus loved doing it. Turn in your Bibles to Mark, Chapter 2, verses 13-22.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 2:13-22 ¹³ *Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. ¹⁴ As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.*

¹⁵ *While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. ¹⁶ When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"*

¹⁷ *On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

¹⁸ *Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?"*

¹⁹ *Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. ²⁰ But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast.*

²¹ *"No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. ²² And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins."*

ILLUSTRATION: There's a book called "First Break All the Rules," and the man who wrote the book is named Marcus Buckingham, who worked for the Gallup Poll

organization. And, 80,000 supervisors in different companies around the world were surveyed. And, Mr. Buckingham came up with several conclusions. One of his conclusions—the thesis of his book—is this: The most successful managers in the most successful businesses are the men and women who have taken conventional wisdom and the common everyday thinking and just turned them upside down. But, it does seem that in our world, sometimes we don't turn those rules upside down. We instead add more rules on top of rules.

It does seem that over time, people have a way of making more and more rules. Think about it. Our legislators meet all the time to propose laws, discuss laws, and make laws. That's what they do. That's their whole purpose. Think about how many less laws we had twenty years ago and how many more laws we'll have twenty years from now.

Think about it—if the Lord should tarry—think about even hundred years from now, the burden of the laws Americans would have because law makers keep getting together and making laws. Many years after laws are passed, we wonder why those laws were ever needed. Listen to some crazy laws:

- We have a law in Tennessee. It's called the Gateway Sexual Activity Bill. It was passed by the Tennessee House of Representatives in 2012. The bill outlaws students holding hands with each other while at school (because, according to the Tennessee House of Reps, holding hands is a "gateway" to sexual activity). It also allows the parents of the student to sue the teachers if they feel the teachers aren't doing enough to prevent sexual activity among the students. *How many kids hold hands every day? How many people holds hands every day?*
- Did you know, in Georgia, it is illegal to use profanity in front of a dead body in a funeral home or in a coroner's office? *I'm quite certain numerous people have broken that law.*
- In Arkansas, flirtation between men and women on the streets of Little Rock may result in a 30-day jail term. *I'm quite certain that law has been broken.*

I feel that every person who introduced such ideas to become laws had the best intentions, but at some point, laws become burdensome. Rarely are laws repealed. I read about a time when a certain law was repealed.

- It used to be illegal to insult or throw things at a public speaker in Kentucky. That was repealed in 1975. *Go figure.*

EXPLANATION: In the day in which Jesus Christ lived, Jewish believers were living under laws that were just about as absurd. The laws became burdens. Living without breaking laws required a lot of astute concentration.

Well...here came Jesus. Jesus wasn't concerned at all with man's rules. Jesus went out of his way to break the unnecessary religious rules, which were choking the joy out of believers.

Today, I want to point out to you some of the rules that Jesus broke. The first rule Jesus delighted in breaking according to this passage of Mark 2, was this—Jesus delighted in breaking man's rules—

First, BY CALLING A TAX COLLECTOR AS HIS DISCIPLE.

EXPLANATION: A few weeks ago, I told you about rabbis having young disciples around them. Boys learned the scripture and went to rabbis with the hopes they'd be asked to become their disciples. The words they wanted to hear were: "Follow me." Those that didn't hear it returned to their father's profession.

Now here we have Levi. Why in the world did Jesus call him to be a disciple? There was something about him Jesus saw—something the other rabbis must have missed, just like with James and John.

Tax collectors were known for being dishonest. We don't have any record at all that Levi was dishonest. But, I am certain he was disliked. You see, he was a Jewish man who collected taxes for the Roman government.

ILLUSTRATION: When I was a student at UT, they had a campus job called a student ticket writer. Students literally walked around and wrote tickets for cars that were illegally parked. No one liked student ticket writers. Many saw them as betrayers.

EXPLANATION: Jesus called Levi—a man many disliked. And, what was Levi's response? He followed Jesus. Leaving such employment meant he'd never have a government job again. If he had remained a tax collector, he would have been employed forever as long as he delivered. You see, Levi gave up his security.

APPLICATION: Jesus sees something in you no one else sees. Today he is calling out to you. Won't you become his disciple? Whatever you are holding onto is nothing compared to the journey Jesus has for you. Any security you have to give up to be a follower of Jesus is not a security.

The second rule Jesus broke was EATING WITH SINNERS.

EXPLANATION: A rabbi, a religious man, would never be seen eating with a tax collector. The Pharisees, in their zeal to be visible reminders of the holy, went too far. They went completely overboard. They thought they'd reached sinless perfection on this side of eternity. And, they picked and chose who the sinners were. And, now, here's Jesus, this odd rabbi eating with them. In this day, to eat with tax collectors—those traitors—and with people who were sinners, with people who were probably not Jews, and with people who were Jews but followed Jesus...it would have been shocking and awful to those perfect sinners.

ILLUSTRATION: The week before last, I was just ahead of the worst of the snowstorm when the traffic came to a halt on I-40 due to a wreck. In just a few

minutes, while sitting there in traffic, I was overtaken by the snow. The car overheated, and I had to get it towed to a garage on the plateau. I had a long wait in that old garage. This was one of those gas stations where the restroom doors are on the outside of the building. I walked in the men's restroom and saw a restroom that had probably never been cleaned. Now, why did I put that image in your mind just before lunch? Because the revulsion you feel is the same revulsion the Pharisees would have felt seeing Jesus eating with the tax collector and those who were called sinners.

The third rule Jesus broke was EATING WHILE OTHERS WERE FASTING.

EXPLANATION: I was always taught fasting is a personal, private thing. And, I still hold that belief. People who fast for spiritual reasons and let others know it probably negate the purpose of the fast. But, the Pharisees certainly let everyone know when they were fasting. It was a badge of courage for them. *“We’re fasting. We’re so spiritual. Look at us.”*

While they were being so spiritual with their fasting, what was Jesus doing? Eating and having fun. And, his answer to them was a riddle. He talked about the bridegroom, or as we would say it, the groom. This statement was symbolic of three things.

First, Jesus is the bride, and his followers are the groom. The Pharisees would have known their nation's history when God had treated his people, the Israelites, as if they were his bride. When they disobeyed him, he accused them of spiritual adultery. When they followed him, he blessed them the way a loving groom would love his bride.

Second, Jesus' statement about the groom is symbolic of celebration. And, so now Jesus claims to be the groom. And, what his riddle means is this: What groom is going to call the people at a wedding to a fast? And, in this day, a wedding would

have been a lengthy event, even a multiday event. What groom would say, *“Hey eat before you get here, because when you get here, we’re going to celebrate by fasting!”*?

Third, Jesus’ statement about the groom is a foreshadowing of the challenges believers in the future will endure. And, Church history tells us of the persecution that came. In many parts of the world, the persecution of Christians is a common, everyday occurrence.

APPLICATION: Here’s our practical application of the bridegroom analogy. The Pharisees turned worship into misery by creating excessive, unnecessary rules. Jesus came, broke all their rules, and brought joy to the worship experience.

Church should be an enjoyable place. At times, we may have some serious business to take care of, and at times, things might not be enjoyable. But, really, that should be only temporary. Corporate worship should be as enjoyable as a wedding with its celebration. Corporate, joyful worship should prepare us for challenging days.

Jesus gave them an answer to his question about why he came, which is something I’ll speak to at another time.

CONCLUSION: Here’s my conclusion. Jesus broke the rules. Do you know why? Because they were the rules of man. Don’t we come up with the most clever rules? I’ve told before about the man who yelled at children, *“Don’t run in God’s house?”* I still wonder what he meant by that. They were just kids, and no one else was around. There was no harm being done. As soon as he went away, I told the kids, *“Hey, let’s race, but don’t tell that mean old man.”*

I’ve served five churches in my adult life, and while growing up, my family went to several different churches. One of those churches had ruled themselves to death. No matter what anyone wanted to do, inevitably some old rule would squelch the idea. *“Well we don’t let the youth use that room, because one time a long time ago...”*

Listen to me—if old rules are enabling ministry, we need to keep them. If old rules are hindering ministry, then we need to break the rules.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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