

Monday Evening Bible Reading Group: September 30th 2019: St Mark Chapter 2 verses 18-27

Content: Fasting and celebrating; mixing the new with the old/ replacing the old with the new; picking and eating corn on Sunday.

Background

Fasting: The absolute must in Jewish fasting was the Day of Atonement. For the Pharisees, Mondays and Thursdays 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. was fasting time; and some of them whitened their faces and looked scruffy to show they were fasting. Personal discipline not a bad thing; flaunting being “good” always a bad thing. The seven days of a wedding were fast-free: really making the point that fasting is not an end in itself, and there are more important things. (In my College on Fast Day, the Fellows ad to put up with Dover Sole for dinner!)

Old cloth and new: I gather tat doing patches with unshrunk cloth comes unstuck when it rains. Hardened wine skins don’t stretch to accommodate fermenting wine. (No bottles then.) Accommodating new ideas and practices is still an issue in churches! It was in the Early Church: which new things were fresh ideas and fresh expressions, and which were heresies and aberrations?

Picking corn on the Sabbath. OK to pinch some corn on the other days of the week; but “work” on the Sabbath. (Interesting to know whether lighting a cigarette on the Sabbath would have been work, but smoking without lighting OK.) Shewbread is in Leviticus 24 verse 9, and the David story is in 1 Samuel 21 verses 1-6. The claims of human need over religious observance are beautifully portrayed in the story of “The Fourth Wise Man”.

Questions: *How do we balance familiar truths and practices and new truths and practices. - distinguish gimmicks from helpful innovations? Does keeping Sunday special matter; and, if it does, how do we do it?*