

**Luke 5:33-6:11**

**The way of Jesus is anchored by joy and freedom.**

Anchors are good things. Made to keep a ship in its place, an anchor, an immovable weight, being tied to something more solid, which gives steadiness to what it is attached to.

And in light of our text this morning I have been thinking about bouncy castles. Every now and again, when someone in our neighborhood wants to throw a good party, when they really want the kids to have a blast, they rent or bring our a bouncy house and the low buzz of the air pump becomes the whitenoise of celebration.

I like bouncy houses. The bigger the better, they actually have to be pretty big if I am on them! The bouncing, near weightless sensation we get. The thrill of excitement as we launch into the air and then are cradled again by the soft landing air in nylon provides.

For all of the fun they are likely to produce, bouncy houses can still pose significant danger. I don't mean the collision of heads between rambunctious kids (however dangerous that is) but I mean when the bouncy house is untethered.

It turns out that big objects filled with nothing but air are prone to being carried away by strong wind. We have all heard stories of the different kind of excitement brought by a bouncy house floating away into the sky!

Peril here is avoided by being anchored, tethered to something heavy and secure.

In our text today we have the response to a party (that if it was held in my neighborhood today would have had a bouncy house) and in the displeasure of the religious elite we find the better way of being anchored in joy and freedom.

The way of Jesus is anchored by joy and freedom.

The Kingdom of God is different - it is new - and it is misunderstood. The people meant to receive the kingdom have tainted expectations for it and miss it. And part of the “always reforming “ aspect of the church is (or should be) a constant rediscovery of the kingdom and the way of Jesus. The things of identity for believers, of how to accept and reflect the good news of his grace, and how to live in response to it.

This is the point of our journey through Luke’s gospel. Rightly seeing the Kingdom and living as citizens. This will, as it always has, unsettle regimes and depending on how deep the influence of the old ways reach, our hearts.

But in the unsettling we find tremendous hope. We find the gift of joy and freedom.

If you are looking to be anchored, hear me out. It is for your good!

## **Joy**

Situation - Jesus has begun calling people to follow him and those that answer the call make the religious class uneasy. “Tax collectors and sinners!”

“Jesus replied to them, “It is not those who are healthy who need a doctor, but those who are sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” -- **Luke 5:31-32** (CSB)

Silly pharisees don’t realize they need a doctor, and they hate when other people do.

But what’s more, when they came to Jesus they party. We can’t miss that. Levi/Matthew throws a feast and his friends are there with the disciples and Jesus. Our text then is in the midst of pharisaical push back and questioning that actually gives us insight into what our lives with Christ are meant to be like.

“John’s disciples fast often and say prayers, and those of the Pharisees do the same, but yours eat and drink.” -- **Luke 5:33** (CSB)

Now, we need to understand that Jesus' answer here is not forbidding or canceling fasting and prayer - things that will be regular in the lives of his followers, but it is the posture or approach to life that is being challenged.

John's disciples, following the preaching of repentance (WOE), carry themselves with a level of severity or seriousness appropriate. Pharisees, for them a smug gloominess makes you all the more religious, the more performative the better.

The way of Jesus is not against "seriousness" - after all, sin is real, oppression is real. But there is good news that answers those things with forgiveness, flourishing, comfort. It is different from what these opponents are used to.

They could not fathom his disciples' participation in the shocking event, or their generally joyous approach to life, which seemed to exclude fasting.

The wedding party keeps going when the groom is with them. It just makes sense that those with Jesus would enjoy him!

Those questioning him essentially think they are too "good" for this crowd and that's what is driving the questioning. They can't control attendance at this party. They don't get to pick the seat of honor. With Jesus things are different and won't be mixed with the old way of performance.

We are familiar with dour Christianity (severe, stern, gloomy). We often think we know better than Jesus how to behave. And we all know how easy it is to become severe curmudgeonly people!

"Erma Bombeck wrote about sitting in church one Sunday when a small child turned around and began to smile at the people behind her. When her mother noticed, she told her daughter in a stage whisper, "Stop that grinning—you're in church," gave her a swat, and said, "That's better!" Bombeck concluded that some people come to church looking like they have just read the will of their rich aunt only to learn that she left everything to her pet hamster!"

That's not who we see with Jesus. There is a lightness, a revelry. Joy. This is what Jesus smells like!

I need to make clear our joy itself is anchored in Christ and his work and claim over us. That we still have sadness, lament, difficulty, but a joy that drives hope because we are in Christ.

The Pharisees made their performance the main thing instead of the mercy, grace, and provision of God. It's the problem through the Old Testament, Israel getting it wrong over and over again. Yet they kept going about life putting on a show. Public prayers and attention seeking. And fasting... fasting for them is like cross fit.

Don't get me wrong, I think crossfit is good, I want to do it but don't want to spend the money to join a gym.

How do you know a cross fitter? They will tell you!

The same thing happens with Pharisees that fast... Jesus will even teach his followers the better way.

“Whenever you fast, don't be gloomy like the hypocrites. For they disfigure their faces so that their fasting is obvious to people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that your fasting isn't obvious to others but to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” -- **Matthew 6:16-18** (CSB)

I am all for fasting and even the appropriateness of doing it corporately - but I wonder if we shouldn't hear about it!

And when Jesus says that there is a time coming for them to fast, “when the groom will be taken away from them,” we might be prone to think, that means now. But alas, this is Jesus who says “I will be with you always until the end of the age!” Gives his Spirit and takes us residence in your heart, in you the new temple of God. The groom is with you, let the gloom blow in the wind.

“The bridegroom is with us, and we are the bride (cf. Ephesians 5:23–27)! Because he is the bridegroom of our soul, life is a celebration.” Hughes

On the heels of the controversy about fasting, Jesus illustrated the point that his message was radical (the new) and could not serve as a patch for the existing form of Judaism (the old garment).

The way of Jesus is different - you can't merge religious law of the day with his way - you can't put a patch of his grace on a garment of smugness - they will tear each other. You can't merely add Jesus to your performative religious repertoire.

The fermenting joy and newness in Christ is going to blow up old systems, perspectives, and boundaries.

“Jesus was a joyous person who “for the joy that was set before him endured the cross” (Hebrews 12:2). His sinless human personality radiated joy. He was love incarnate, and people felt his love. Jesus cared, and his disciples knew it. His presence evoked a sense of security and well-being. Jesus was also holy, and to be in the presence of perfect transcendent purity made his followers aware of their sin. But his presence was also a bath to the soul, for he forgives sin.” Hughes

Jesus brought genuine release from real guilt, liberation from bondage. As they followed him, his disciples awoke each day with bounding hope. They found life to be a continual feast in the presence of Jesus.

And this is for us!

When Christ fills our lives, the swelling life within expands us beyond our imagining. The inner life expels unneeded qualities and fills every aspect of life. Once Christ takes up residence in our lives, every aspect of our being—from our intellect to our emotions to our will —undergoes change. And Christ keeps increasing our spiritual capacity, so that we will always be able to hold more of his fullness. The more we receive, the more we are able to receive.

It's hard for those entrenched in the old way to experience this joy - they have a taste of the old and miss out on the way of Jesus.

As at a wedding feast - this is our lives in Christ. May we be known for this joy.

## **Freedom**

Two episodes on the Sabbath that again reveal the way of Jesus to be different.

Some of us have a sense of the Sabbath. They built-in-to-the-calendar regular rest. A day off of work and labor to thank the Lord and recognize his provision. An important part of the life of God's people. Truly a gift.

Yet the religious elite had a habit of publishing new white-papers on just how far you could go and what you ate and how you ate it on Sabbath mattered to them. The law-keepers always make the law more unattainable!

“In both the old and new covenants God gives instructions for how his people are to live in faithful response to him. Observing the Sabbath rest is one such example from the law. Yet in both the old and new covenants human nature is the same in our tendency to take God's instruction and make it external rather than internal, religious rather than faithful, law rather than grace. These two Sabbath-conflict stories show this human tendency and speak directly against a legalistic, gospel-less way of living.” GTB

“God had commanded Israel to remember the Sabbath as a time of rest, spiritual refreshment, and no labor (see Exod 20:8-11). But the Pharisees were extra-scrupulous. They added numerous laws to God's law about what kind of activities constituted labor.” Tony Evans

Since the Sabbath was when people gathered in the synagogue, Jesus was regularly teaching and doing ministry then.

The Pharisees were always trying to catch Jesus doing wrong - they essentially say throughout the gospel accounts that “their rules are more important than Jesus” showing they have no clue who Jesus truly is!

As they are going, Jesus' disciples are picking heads of grain (which would have been fine according to their law) but they were also rubbing the grain in their hands like a mill which is breaking the “law.”

In response to their charge of “unlawful,” Jesus tells of David eating the bread from the Temple which was restricted for the priests only after it has been out in the temple for a day. The hungry eat!

“What do you know of lawful!”

Then comes another clear claim of his divinity, that he is God. “The Son of Man is the Lord of the Sabbath.”

They hated him when he forgave the sins of a paralytic because only God can forgive. And now they will hate him because he is Lord of the Sabbath. They no longer get to decide what is lawful. There is a new Messiah in town!

Jesus show his way is the New over nit-picking. They lived with a fussy, constant fault-finding. His followers instead have a freedom to live.

How many of us had been told that one of our kids' friends has lice? You wash their hair with the right shampoo then you go about combing out the nits (lice eggs). Tedious. There is a better way... just shave their head!

Pharisees want to pick at nits under the sun sets but Jesus has cured their itch and sets his followers free to live forgiven and for his glory, spreading the good news of the Kingdom.

What’s constraining, what keeps you famished and broken is out.

Then Jesus again heals on the Sabbath. I love it because Jesus sets it up asking the man with shriveled hand to stand in the front. He knows their thoughts.

“Then Jesus said to them, “I ask you: Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?” -- **Luke 6:9** (CSB)

Then he healed him.

Just like the man he forgives, Jesus brings these people into a restored, flourishing life. He mends what is broken, he covers the breach, he gives of himself to forgive and make us righteous. As a gift, his Kingdom goes forth unleashing freedom on all who believe in him.

What Jesus brings is not just an end to the gatekeeping and nit-picking of religious law - it is renewal - flourishing - people fed and healed.

The old wine tastes like control and death - the new wine is the fragrance of freedom and life. All grace for all of life.

We understand the sentiment, and you have probably heard it before, “if you preach grace people will sin more!” As if they need permission!

The question is, will we trust Jesus in this? That his forgiveness actually transforms our lives, that gives us a joy and freedom to live for something more.

The Pharisees are enraged. They rather a life be destroyed - to do evil.

“In God’s view, a refusal to do good is to do evil—“good omitted is evil committed” (Godet).<sup>2</sup> There is no neutral ground. To refuse to “save life” is to “destroy it.”<sup>3</sup> To refuse to show mercy is a declaration of one’s own damnation.”  
Hughes

The fact is, true faith produces mercy but instead they begin plotting to take Jesus out from that moment.

Over the last couple of weeks I keep seeing a clip of a prominent pastor saying something along the lines of “if the world doesn’t hate you like they hated Jesus, then you are not a Christian...”

True-ish. “If the world hates you, understand that it hated me before it hated you.” -- **John 15:18** (CSB)

World here is “kosmos,” The world system, the prevailing order.

It’s those trying to maintain prominence and power that despise Jesus. That rather do evil than good to keep their religious image intact.

“Some people will never like you because your spirit irritates their demons.”  
Denzel Washington. We might be rejected by people that way down at a primal level, without realizing it, reject Jesus.



For those that follow him though, we are anchored in joy and freedom - he is with us, the Lord of the Sabbath. This is different than what we knew before. And it is good.

And the way of Jesus is going to keep going deeper - sermon on the plain.

We live in his way when we are rooted in joy and freedom - as our prevailing posture. Life with the King who gave of himself for us to make us part of his Kingdom.

It's reason enough to feast. Reason to be free.

**The way of Jesus is anchored by joy and freedom.**

***Pursue joy*** - Find it in the presence of Jesus, realize he dwells within you by his Spirit. This joy is not delusional, that doesn't recognize the weight and challenges of life, but it is settled. Not held by the chains that once ruled but kept by Christ and his work for us, come what may.

***Live free*** - Cast off the shackles of gate-keeping and nit-picking. Don't put this new wine in the old rigid wineskins. You are his - you are forgiven. "Stretch out your hand!"

The bouncy house is fun when it is anchored. Our lives in the way of Jesus are to be anchored in joy and freedom.

Are you up for that? Let's jump!