

J.R. Miller:

"How can the guests of the bridegroom fast â€" while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them." Mark 2:19

This was our Lord's answer to those who thought His religion was too sunny and joyous â€" that it had not fast-days enough in it. They thought that religion was genuine â€" only when it made people sad, and that its quality was just in proportion to its gloom. But Christ's reply showed that mournful faces are no essential indicators of heart-piety. Should His disciples be mournful and sad â€" when He was with them, filling their lives with the gladness of His presence? Should Christians profess to be heavy-hearted, wearing the symbols of grief â€" when they are really filled with joy, and when there is no occasion for sorrow? Why should one who has been saved by the Lord Jesus, and who is rejoicing in full assurance to hope â€" go about in sackcloth and ashes? Is there any piety in a sad face? Does God love to see His children always mourning? Is human joy displeasing to our Father?

All these questions are answered here in our Lord's words. He does not wish His disciples to go mourning and fasting â€" when they have no occasion for such exercises. His words are a defense of Christian joyfulness. Christ wants His friends to be glad. There is an utter incongruity in a sad and mournful Christian life. By its very nature â€" true religion is joyous. Our sins are forgiven. We are adopted into God's family. We are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. The covenant of love arches its shelter over us all the while. All things in this world work together for our good â€" and then glory waits for us beyond death's gate. With all this blessed heritage â€" why should we be mournful and sad? While we enjoy the smile of Christ, the consciousness of his love, the assurance of his forgiveness, and the hope of Heaven and eternal life â€" what should make us sad? We should have radiant faces!