

# “What Do We Do Now?”

Mark 2:23-3:6

Sermon notes from the pulpit of  
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What do we do now?

That’s the question the alcoholics and addicts ask each week in group on the quirky Netflix dramedy called *Loudermilk*. *Loudermilk* is their facilitator. He’s been sober for three years and runs the weekly recovery group in a Seattle Catholic Church. He’s quirky, flawed, crude, and carries a ton of his own baggage, but he has created a safe place for recovering alcoholics and addicts.

Each week this hodgepodge group sits on plastic chairs arranged in a circle. They look into each other’s faces. And they are invited to report in. They share their unfolding story. I had a slip. I’m having trouble working through a problem. I’m sober for another week, but I’m still lonely. I’ve experienced beauty this week, and my life is going okay. I’m having trouble at my job.

The show is well-written, often funny, and sometimes poignant.

The question each week these characters are essentially asking each other is, “What do we do now?”

And *Loudermilk* suggests this answer: Don’t do drugs. Keep on doing the good work we are doing together. Don’t drink. Be honest with yourself and with others. One step at a time. Reach out if you need a hand. Help out if you can. Be where your feet are. Be gentle with yourself. Keep on keeping on.

This is a real recipe for recovery that has worked for millions and millions of people.

We all ask the same question: What do we do now?

Consider these case studies: Because she’s not getting any younger, she thinks maybe she should downsize. The teenager is eager and ready and terrified to move out. I’ve graduated from college. My fiancée said, “Yes!” Pandemic is over. Our pastor is leaving to take another call. Summer is finally here. I just turned eighty.

“What do we do now?”

It’s a question that is exciting and suggests possibility. It’s a question that’s a little scary. Not only do we wonder about the next steps, we wonder about the next step. It’s easy to get ahead of ourselves. We don’t want to worry about things we don’t need to worry about, but worry has a way not respecting boundaries. It’s easy to feel overwhelmed or discouraged. *What do we do now?*

Hold on to that thought.

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In our text today, everybody is watching Jesus. They watching to see what he’s going to do next. So far, they’ve been critical of him. Jesus and his disciples pluck some grain on the sabbath. The Pharisees call

him on it: that's not allowed on the sabbath. You are breaking the law. Jesus tells them it's not unlawful to eat when you are hungry. Jesus reminded them King David did it.

And on another sabbath, he does it again.

A man with a withered hand comes to Jesus on the sabbath in the synagogue. They are watching, watching Jesus to see what he's going to do next. They are waiting to catch him breaking the law again. Is he going to heal this man? Such "work" is not allowed on the sabbath. All eyes are on Jesus. *What is he going to do now?*

Jesus gets red hot. "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?" Then, he heals the man. He breaks the wrongly held law of the land and fulfills the law of love.

What's Jesus going to do now? Everybody who watches Jesus is beginning to see a pattern. *What's he going to do now?* He's going to help others. He's going to be faithful. He's going to do everything he can to bring healing to the world. He's going to spend himself in service. He's going to wash feet. He's going to set an example. He's going to forgive. He's going to love. He's going to listen. He's going to build relationships. He's going to go the extra mile. He's going to learn and teach. He's going to dance at weddings and eat with tax collectors and sinners. Jesus doesn't care for unity so much as harmony. He invites us to be our true selves and to sing with all our might. He's going to pray and worship and welcome others into his circle. He's going to stand up to injustice. He's going to celebrate the religious festivals. He's going to do his best to right the wrongs of the world. He's going to hold people accountable. He's going to treat everybody will respect and honor, people like women and children and lepers and all manner of people no matter their status.

What's Jesus going to do now? He's going to do his best, with all his might, to bring a little heaven to earth. No matter what, he's going to make room for God. No matter what, he's going to love until it breaks his heart again and again and again. No matter what, he's going to delight in the God who runs to greet his lost child coming home after a bunch of bad decisions and a wayward season of riotous living.

Like Loudermilk and every leader of every recovery group in every church fellowship hall and VFW, Jesus is going to welcome anyone who walks into the door and he's going to invite them pull up a chair to join the circle.

What do *we* do now?

Our country faces decisions. Elections in South Africa have put that country on an uncharted road. What do the elections in Mexico mean? Our church stands at the beginning of a new chapter. Sometimes it seems like Christianity is wobbling on some brink. Our family is morphing to a new normal after a loss. We're feeling brave. We're afraid and excited and worried and more than a little curious. We don't know what's going to happen.

And we wonder: What do we do now? What do we do next?

We take a deep breath, and we do what faithful people have always tried to do. We trust steadily in God. We call on and count on the Spirit. We hope unswervingly. We follow Jesus. And we go where he goes. We do what he does. And we love as deeply and as joyfully and as extravagantly as we can.

We join Jesus in walking to predictable pattern that he walked—of seeking justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God.

That is what we do now.

AMEN.

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**Mark 2:23-3:6**

<sup>2:23</sup>One sabbath he was going through the grainfields; and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. <sup>24</sup>The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?" <sup>25</sup>And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food? <sup>26</sup>He entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions." <sup>27</sup>Then he said to them, "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath; <sup>28</sup>so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath."

<sup>3:1</sup>Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. <sup>2</sup>They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. <sup>3</sup>And he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come forward." <sup>4</sup>Then he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. <sup>5</sup>He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. <sup>6</sup>The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.