

Parables: Jesus the Storyteller, Luke 5:36-38, 6/20/21

Growing in the 80's and 90's we all had Rotary Phones in our house. In fact this one [Phone Picture] is the exact model we had in our basement. No judgment zone, does anyone still use one of these? The way you use this is to put your finger in the number hole and spin it around to the metal bar. My parents would always ask, is that a local or long-distance call? And only one person can use the phone at a time, in fact any other phone in the house was also connected to that same line. When my oldest brother was on the phone with his girlfriend, my middle brother and I would pick up the phone on the other end and listen...and then make obnoxious sounds. Of course now we all have cellphones which are way better. It fits in your pocket, No cords, no wires, no long-distance, you can take it anywhere... they can make phone calls, but that is probably the least used feature now. This amazing new thing comes and it makes the old thing completely obsolete. This happens all the time in technology. But in the parable we are going to study today Jesus demonstrates how he has brought a permanently new way of relating to God that makes the old way permanently obsolete. Actually two parables for the price of one...let's read them.

Luke 5:36-38

³⁶ He told them this parable: "No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old."

I used to be between sizes. x-large was too big, large was too small. The solution was to buy x-large shirts and then shrink them. Now if one of those shirts, already shrunk got a rip in it, and I bought the same exact shirt and tried to patch it at first it might work, but as soon as it gets put in the dryer the patch will shrink and ruin the shirt. Now I've ruined both shirts. That's the picture.

³⁷ And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. ³⁸ No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins.

In ancient cultures the skins of goats [picture] were used to make and store wine. And the reason wine was put in goat skins is because a new animal skin is very elastic. And wine as it ferments there is pressure that builds which stretches in the wineskin. Once it stretches, once it ferments, it's stabilized and it can keep like that. But, once it stretches and loses its elasticity it becomes brittle. So, if you were to take a wineskin, use it for a period of time and then you say, "You know what, I'll just use the old one and pour new one wine into it." Nope, there's no more elasticity and it's going to burst.

Ok- the new patch doesn't work on an old shirt, the new wine doesn't hold in an old wineskin. Now, Jesus doesn't explain to us what this parable means. Remember the purpose of parables- they reveal the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven to those who are really listening, they conceal the truth for those who have hardened their hearts. The only way we can really know

what Jesus is talking about is to look at the context and conversations Jesus was having prior to this parable. Let me tell you what I believe it means and then demonstrate it from the context of the chapter. In the same way a new patch is incompatible with an old shirt, and the new wine can't be contained with old wineskins: **The old structures and ways of religion are incompatible with and can't contain the new Gospel of Jesus Christ.** Jesus is saying, I'm not here to make religion a little better or to patch some holes in the system, some duct tape isn't going to work...I'm bringing something new, new way to relate to God, for all people to access salvation, a way to experience true life transformation. If you want to follow me, you can't bring your old religious structures and systems with you, they are obsolete." When you buy your cell phone you don't grab the rotary phone off the wall and drag it with you. But he's saying something more. Trying to mix together Jesus with your religious systems (syncretism) will ruin both. It can't be Gospel AND. If you mix anything with Gospel you lose the gospel. Jesus says, "Leave it all behind and embrace me, the new wine and wineskins."

That's what this parable is all about. Now the truth and power of this parable comes to life through the three religious groups that encounter Jesus just before this parable. They each represent the old wine and wineskins of religion that struggle to embrace the new wine of Jesus and leave behind the old. And the challenge that Jesus gives in each encounter is to make sure we have fully embraced the new way of the Gospel and have left behind the systems of religion that are obsolete. See we all have a tendency toward the systems and structures of **"Old Wine and Wineskin" Religion: Ways of attempting to gain access to God through having the right methods, being associated with the right people and living by the right rules.** These systems dwell in our hearts and Jesus is going to help us see them today so we can leave them behind.

Old wine and wineskins of "having the right methods" Luke 5:17-26

To picture the scene- Jesus is invited into a home where he is healing many, it was so crowded that a paralyzed man was lowered through the roof to Jesus by his friends...you need to get some friends like that. Jesus sees the faith of the man and instead of healing him immediately, he says, "Your sins are forgiven." Now, the man may have been a little confused...that's great, ummm...my legs? Jesus was using this as a teachable moment for the man but also all who were there, including the religious leaders. That the deepest need for healing is spiritual. You might be able to walk again, but if you walk out this house and get run over by a chariot and die, this miracle isn't going to help much. And so "experts of the law" equate such a statement with blasphemy. They had the right methods to access forgiveness- "Only God can forgive sins and he only does through the priest offering an unblemished animal sacrifice at the temple in Jerusalem." By the way, up to this point, they were right that this was the method of the sacrificial system set up in the Mosaic law. But they had become so narrow-minded, so focused on their methods that they missed God standing right in front of them. So Jesus tells them that he has the power to forgive sins, and proves it by doing what would have seemed harder to declare- to tell a paralyzed man to walk. And this is exactly what he does. Jesus reveals the new wine- It's not about the old methods of religion. We don't need to find a priest as a mediator to God- Jesus is the High Priest and we can now go directly to him. We don't need to offer a spotless lamb as a sacrifice every time we sin and mess up, Jesus is the once and for all spotless

lamb who was sacrificed for us. We don't need to go up to the temple in Jerusalem because Jesus himself is the temple. **New wine and wineskins: By faith in Jesus our sins are forgiven.**

1 Timothy 2:5 For, There is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the man Christ Jesus. We might not be flying to Jerusalem with a lamb to offer a sacrifice- but some of us are still going to old methods of religion to get God to forgive you. Or you say “Jesus And”- Going to a priest to confess, praying enough, trying to be a good person, religious effort. These are old wineskin methods to say God has to forgive me if I went through all these hoops. This is attempting to pour the new wine into old wineskins- they will burst, can't hold. Jesus says, the way of forgiveness is through faith in Jesus Christ's finished work on the cross alone.

The old wine and wineskins of “being associated with the right people.” Luke 5:27-31

Jesus extends mercy to Matthew, who was a tax-collector. Now that's not a big deal today, but in that day, he would have been a pariah to religious Jews. Tax collectors were Jews who sold out to the Roman oppressors. They had a reputation as being greedy, immoral cheats. Modern day comparison- Phone scammer who tries to convince people they are the IRS and you owe money. And so Matthew invites all “his people” to a dinner party with Jesus and his disciples. Just picture the scene- the holiness of God incarnate, hanging with these phone scammers. So the pharisees are indignant. How can Jesus hang out with these people? This was in great contrast to the methods of religious, only associate with people like you. They felt a false sense of religious security because they associated with the right religious people and avoided the bad people.

³¹ Jesus answered them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Jesus has come to call all people (sinners and saints) to a relationship to God through him but the old wine thinking was that God only loves the good crowd and so you need to be part of that crowd. Old wine thinking was external association, the new wine of Jesus is that true spiritual health isn't determined by the right external associations but right internal association with God that is wide open for all people through Jesus, no matter how messed up their background is.

Some people when you ask them why they think they will go to heaven one day will say they will start going through their associations, well I grew up going to church, my parents were actually charter members, my grandfather was a pastor...I got confirmed and baptized in the church, I'm a member. Old wine thinking...If you have an association with everyone but you don't have Jesus, you have nothing. If you have Jesus, even if everyone else abandoned you- you have everything. **New wine and wineskins- Your acceptance by God comes from your association with Jesus Christ alone.**

Old wineskins of “living by the right rules.” Luke 5:33-35

Jesus and the disciples are still at this party at Matthew the tax-collector's house. There is another religious group that questions Jesus and his disciples, John the Baptist's followers. And they ask why the disciples aren't fasting, in fact they are doing the opposite, they are feasting.

John was an ascetic- his message called for mourning and fasting. John came as the ultimate and final prophet of the old covenant to prepare the way for the new covenant of the Messiah. By Jesus' time, godly people fasted 2x a week (Mondays and Thursdays). Certainly that would have been John's disciples who lived in strict self-denial, fasting and austerity as John had done. The old wine idea may have been that you could not be spiritual unless you're strict and solemn. Some people carry this into church. The more boring, long, uncomfortable and inaccessible the service is the more spiritual it is. "The service is in Latin, I have no idea what they are saying but I just feel more spiritual if I'm suffering through this." What? One author wrote about sitting in church one Sunday when a small child turned around begin 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 and she gave her a swat. The author 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. These are old wineskins. What John's disciples were seeing at Matthew's house did not seem to mesh with the rules they had been taught about spirituality- Drinking? Feasting? Laughing? Celebration? This can't be spiritual and acceptable to God.

But the new wineskin truth is that a true relationship with God is more like feasting than fasting, more like a wedding than a funeral. ³⁴ *Jesus answered, "Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while he is with them?"* Now in this one rhetorical question Jesus answering a question about true spirituality while simultaneously confirming hundreds of years of prophecy about his identity as the Messiah. Weddings were 7-day celebrations including feasting, drinking, music and dancing. It would have been completely inappropriate to fast, to be stern and gloomy at a wedding celebration. No one wants a downer at a wedding.

Jesus is saying, "Well guess what? I'm the groom and you are at my wedding." He is the fulfillment of the OT messianic prophecy Hosea, Song of Solomon...that God will come to his people like a groom to his bride. Jesus is saying that's happening right now. "The groom is with you! Being with me should be characterized by joy!"

There would indeed come a time when the disciples would fast as Jesus explain the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them. That happened at the cross and his disciples mourned. But in his resurrection and ascension the mourning gave way to celebration. Certainly there is a time and place for mourning and fasting and solemnity. But if Jesus dwells in us and his presence with us through his Spirit, our heart posture and our gatherings as his people should be more like weddings than funerals. We have something to celebrate!

Now let's not miss the larger point. Old wineskin way was through adherence to the rules and structures of religion. Fasting a certain number of times was a way of gaining the acceptance and status with God. Jesus says, no- it's about *living in spiritual union with Jesus Christ*...a relationship with the groom, Jesus Christ. If the sum total of your Christianity is trying to live by the rules- you are missing it. Christianity isn't a check list, it's a dynamic, loving, adventurous sometimes challenging relationship with Jesus, like a good marriage is. Going to church, Fasting,

meditation, prayer, Bible study are important spiritual disciplines for our spiritual growth and a way to communion with God, not as a checklist of rules to be acceptable to God.

Old: having the right methods, New: receiving the gift of forgiveness in Jesus.

Old: being associated with the right people, New: being associated with Jesus Christ.

Old: living by the right rules, New: living in union with Jesus.

Jesus finishes his parable with a warning- Don't get stuck in your old ways.

³⁹ And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say, "The old is better."

Jesus isn't talking about aged wine vs. unaged wine here. Wine that is aged is better, and a relationship with Jesus gets better with age. Probably more accurately he is talking about stale wine vs. fresh wine. Religion and traditions of man have a way of trapping us into the "Older must mean better fallacy." Because that's the way we've always done it, it must be adequate and right. He's warning those who have hardened their hearts to the new way of Jesus simply out of being so accustomed, so comfortable, so familiar with the old and the new seems scary and awkward. "No I'm good with the rotary phone. See I can still dial...yeah but it's not even plugged into the wall, there's no dial tone." Or, OK I'll get the cellphone but I'm going to still carry around this old rotary phone...no. Leave it behind, embrace the gospel.