

Topic: “New and Old Wineskins” **Text:** Mark 2:21-22 HPC 3/14/10 New Members

INTRO: I have a mirror in my office with the face of Jesus etched in it and the words:

“Change begins with the man in the mirror.” Many of us here this morning have lived through changes:

- Where new patches could not be sewn on our old garments.
- Where new wine could not be put in our old wineskins.

Think about it - new kinds of music, TV preachers, churches meeting movie theaters, malls & warehouses, changed dress codes, different ways to take communion, virtual churches, liturgical dance, drama, charismatic movement, women in leadership, multi-sensory worship, satellite worship, children’s moments, DVD taught Bible studies, etc. Change is nothing new – Jesus faces this in our passage this morning.

Context - The context of these parables is Jesus being ensnared by the Pharisees over the issue of fasting. While there is only one official fast day in the old tradition, called **Yom Kippur** or the Day of Atonement, the Pharisees and John’s disciples practice fasts every Monday and Thursday as well. The fasts start before sunset and last 25-hours. Seeing an opportunity to form a strange coalition with John’s disciples against Jesus, the Pharisees ask Jesus why his disciples are not fasting? They are trying to put Jesus in a corner and pit some of his potential followers against him.

Jesus answer catches them off guard with a question of his own. **“How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them?”** They cannot so long as they have him with them. But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast. The mention of the bridegroom would have refreshed the mental memory screens of John’s disciples.

John had told his disciples that the one who hears the bridegroom’s voice rejoices. John heard Jesus and rejoiced saying his joy was fulfilled and now Jesus must increase and he must decrease (John 3:29-30). At that juncture, I can see the dismay of the Pharisees as John’s disciples wipe the white off their faces and enter into the joy. They realize they don’t have to fear their judgment and fast to prepare for the coming Kingdom. In Jesus the Bridegroom, the time for salvation is fulfilled and they experience joy because he is now with them.

The image of a wedding is a powerful one. It is unthinkable not to enjoy the food and spirits during the weeklong wedding festivities with the new bride and groom. It’s a time to party and celebrate not put on white faces, shred their robes as proof of their penance, and refrain from food and drink. In a word they have become “old bags” that can’t stretch with the new wine joy of Jesus!

I. NEW AND OLD DON’T MIX

A. New cloth rips the old – Jesus says **no one** puts new cloth on old garments. He rejects a patchwork approach to the Kingdom of God. Now you moms know all

about this from your grandmothers and mothers. Put a new patch on an old garment and when it is washed and dried, the new will shrink and tear the old cloth that has already shrunk from its many washings. The result is not pretty – maybe that is why it is easier for mother and child that some styles today come pre-washed new with holes and tears not intended to be patched! New on old does not work on cloth and lots of other things.

Illus: We lived in Ipswich, MA for 4 years where many homes were built in the 1700's. None were plumb. It was a major carpentry challenge to install a new door or window because the old frame wasn't square. It had to be rebuilt.

Apply: Here at the Patch, the consulting civil engineer told us attaching new to old in our educational building complex is not a good stewardship option. Thus we are in the midst of the *Connecting...Growing...Serving* capital campaign to save toward a new educational complex.

The Pharisees are confronting Jesus because he is not adhering to the old ways with his new practices. He isn't obeying their Jewish traditions. He isn't following the tradition of their elders. Jesus says new ways need new methods. To mix what Jesus brings with the old ways will only bring destruction. Then Jesus gives a 2nd parable to illustrate. No one puts new wine in old wineskins.

- B. New wine bursts old wineskins** – in the first century the wineskins were made from sheep or goatskins. The neck of the animal became the neck of the wineskin. Once the hide was stripped of hair and cured, it could be used to store wine. **No one** put new wine put in old wineskins because it was disastrous. As the wine continued to ferment and expand, the old skin had no stretch left in it and it gradually tore and all the wine leaks out. In their frugal economy, this was a tragic waste of time and effort – poor stewardship.
- C. Parable interpreted** – Jesus distinguishes between the wine which is primary and the wineskins that are useful but secondary. Wineskins are superfluous without the wine they are fashioned to contain. The old Judaism can't contain the new wine of the gospel of Christ. Its ferment will burst through old structures. The Christian faith expands and explodes the old wineskins of Judaism.

Apply: In the church today only one thing is essential – the gospel of Jesus Christ. Then there are those secondary things like wineskins. Wineskins include traditional ways of doing things that have grown up around the gospel. **So what is the relationship between such wineskins the gospel wine?** The wineskins are the points of contact between the wine and the world. The new wine is destined to expand and burst the old wineskins of Judaism as it spreads from Jerusalem, to Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Jesus models ministry as downward and outward. Thus our vision not to just to invite people to Jesus at church, but more important to “take Jesus as he is to

people as they are.” John Wesley called this “**field preaching**.” That is what we do in Haiti by the repaired wells – we tell about Jesus, the Living Water.

Story: Tony Campolo did it arriving in Honolulu after a long flight and couldn’t sleep. He goes to an all night diner. He overhears a group of prostitutes listening as one lady says she was going to have her 39th birthday the next day. Another lady replies scornfully : “What do you want? A birthday party?” She retreats into her shell saying: “I have never had one my whole life, why should I have one now?” So Tony conspires with the diner owner to prepare a cake and have a surprise party for her the next night. At the end Tony prays for her salvation and her life to change and God to be good to her. Startled, the owner asks Tony what church he belongs to? He said: “The one that throws birthday parties for prostitutes at 3:30 in the morning.” Jesus likes those kinds of parties and always shows up!

II. NEW AND OLD TODAY

A. God is a God of newness – These parables remind us that the **gospel** is fresh to each new generation. The wine, the gospel, is the Savior God seeking persons he loves. It is a message that originates in heaven as a grace gift for humankind. It is the story of what God has done for us. The gospel is Good News!

Religion - Meanwhile the old wineskin is like religion – man’s quest for God. It originates on earth and is man-made. It’s the story of what sinful humankind is trying to do, do, do... for a holy God. Religion is good views. The Gospel is good news. The Bible speaks of new things as good:

- A new song
- A new heart
- A new spirit
- A new name
- A new covenant
- A new creation
- A new heaven
- A new earth

Psalm 40:3 – David - “(God) put a new song in my mouth”

Is. 42:9 – “Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them.”

Is. 43:19 – “Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”

Ezek. 11:19 – “And I will give them a new heart, and put a new spirit within them.”

Is. 65:17 – “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth”

Heb 10:20 - The gospel is “the new and living way.”

Mt. 26:28 – Jesus says: “This is my blood of the new covenant.”

In all this God is the unchanging “*Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change*” says James (1:17). Jesus is the “*same yesterday and today and forever*” says the author of Hebrews (13:8). On one hand the gospel, the good news is a message fixed for all time, the wine, but on the other it is constantly being communicated in fresh and creative ways – the wineskins. In the end God says “*Behold, I make all things new*” (Rev. 21:5).

B. The Necessity of new wineskins – inherent in this parable is another lesson. The necessity of new wineskins. Unlike the gospel, the wine, the wineskins are not eternal. As time elapses, they must be replaced. Note that the gospel or good news of Christ does not change - it’s the same wine. Instead the gospel demands new wineskins, new ways to communicate the message in a changing world.

ILLUS: This was so evident when we were at Steele Creek Presbyterian Church for Presbytery last month. Their website says: “Founded in 1760 and has been changing ever since, trying to share the good news of Jesus Christ in meaningful ways while keeping the ‘old, old story’ a refreshing experience.” Friends, the “old, old story” is the wine, the gospel. The changing ever since refreshing experiences are the wineskins interpreting the old, old story to a new generation. They just installed 2 large screens in their old sanctuary and have gone multi-sensory in their worship. They have new wineskins but the wine hasn’t changed since 1760.

APPLY: Here at the Patch we can be affirmed that we are using many of the new wineskins utilized by 15 growing Presbyterian Churches in California documented in the book: *Why Are These Presbyterian Churches Growing?*

APPLY: Here at HPC we have the same gospel but new ways to communicate. Lionel Whiston was in his 80’s when he addressed our seminary class. He writes in his book *New Beginnings – Relational studies in Mark*: “My old wineskin of puritan ethics, with its fixed moral behavior patterns for people has been burst again and again. God has to keep giving me a stretchable heart that receives the new, that loves this new breed of Christian and seeks to relate to people as Jesus did. When Jesus said, ‘New wine is for fresh skins,’ he is saying: “Learn to accept people, sit where they sit, seek to understand their loneliness, their motives, their longings, for meaning and fulfillment.” Lionel was a wise octogenarian.

CLOSE: Friends, change begins with the person in the mirror. Enter the joy of the Bridegroom and share the good news wine of the gospel!