

Message #9

“Old Whiners vs. New Winners”

Mark 2:18-21

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Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?"

Jesus answered, "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.

"No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins."

Introduction

It was 1991 and I was in Indianapolis. This was an evening I had been looking forward

to for a long time. I had told all of my 7th grade friends and I was excited. I was with my Aunt and Uncle, my siblings, and a few cousins. I was ready for this moment. I was in 7th grade and this would be my first time seeing Michael Jordan play basketball. This was the Pacers vs. the Bulls and I was ready. I had my Air Jordan shoes on, a #23 Jersey, and we were all waiting at the locker room entrance in the stands for the Bulls to come running out.

I confess I was terrible at basketball. My older sister was the athlete in the family and she was great. I just never enjoyed basketball. I played basketball in the local YMCA when I was in elementary school but that was about it. I was not good at it and it just was not my thing. But I loved watching the Chicago Bulls and watching Michael Jordan. For a junior high kid living in Illinois this was where all the excitement was for all of us. I'll be honest, almost two years ago from the first time I saw Michael Jordan, I do not remember if the Bulls won or lost that game. But I vividly remember seeing him walk out of that locker room. I vividly remember Michael Jordan being announced and walking out of that court. I was a 7th grade kid and that was for the most part the highlight of my life up to that moment.

Twenty Years later I still believe firmly that Michael Jordan changed basketball forever, was the greatest player to ever play the game, and also that there will never be another player like Michael Jordan. He will always be the greatest. Trust me I can make a great argument for it to this day. In the early 1990's, Michael Jordan was new and did not play like everyone else. He was different, entertaining, and nobody could stop him. The

game was forever changed and the old way to play basketball was over. But now 20 years since those first moments has passed by. That which was once new is now old. Some records have been broken. Michael Jordan has moved from hero to now legend.

The truth is 2,000 years from now nobody will remember the name Michael Jordan. 2,000 years is just too long to be excited about a guy who could bounce a ball and place that ball in a bucket. For Michael Jordan, that which was once new, became old, and later will become forgotten, even with this once thirteen year old kid who waited to see him for the first time running out of the locker room.

The glory of the great days of Israel seemed to have been fading during the time of Jesus Christ. Each generation of Israel since really the time of King Solomon tried to do new things to bring the 'glory days' of Israel back. All of it was meant to honor and bring glory to God but in comparison to the days of Moses, Elijah, or David; it all seemed fairly small. To keep the flame alive many things were attempted. Synagogues were scattered all throughout the Roman Empire for the Jewish people to worship and learn in. A 70 member group consisting of the Sanhedrin known as Pharisees were created to help govern the Israel nation held captive to the Roman empire. Many other ideas were introduced all with the attempt to get God to notice them once again but nothing seemed to work. Tithing a tenth of everything you had became the law of the land. Praying three times a day became required. Fasting twice a week was thought to now be the norm instead of just once a year as the Mosaic Law required.

So many new traditions and laws all with the hope of getting God's attention and restoring the glory Israel once had with God. The glory days of Moses, Elijah, and David seemed so long ago. If only we could bring those days back.

The truth is all of us like the good old days. Whatever we think they were. We like things the way they were. Those good old days usually have deep memories for us. Somehow we quickly become so convinced that the best days are behind us.

But not so with the people of God. The people of God always know that God is always up to something better and greater than before. God's glory was great in the past but His glory remains today and tomorrow.

We are continuing our study in the gospel of Mark and are in chapter 2. Last week we learned how Matthew through a huge party after Jesus called him to Follow Christ. While this party is going on two groups of individuals are very interested in the teachings and behaviors of both Jesus and his followers: Let's hear the conversation they have with Jesus:

Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?"

Jesus not only calls Matthew to follow him purposefully on either Monday or Thursday. Jesus even uses the calling of one of his disciples for a wonderful teaching moment. It

was on Monday's and Thursday's that both the Pharisees fasted as well as John's disciples fasted. By this point in the life of Christ, John the Baptist is now in prison. John the Baptist' ministry is fading and he was perfectly fine with it. In fact he had told his disciples and followers that now they must follow Jesus. He was the greater one that John was talking about. John made it perfectly clear now that they all should follow him. It is curious that John's disciples after he gets into prison seem to hang around the Pharisees instead of Jesus. Perhaps they felt that Jesus was not doing enough to get John out of prison and thought the Pharisees could pull some strings, even though John consistently called the Pharisees a brood of vipers. It appears only Andrew made the full switch as one of John's disciples to now a core disciple of Christ. Another reason perhaps is that John was very ascetic in ministry while Jesus was much more liberal than John. So a question is asked to Jesus.

The question is all about fasting but Jesus' answer is all about Himself and the Kingdom of God? Why Jesus do your disciples never fast and all the other disciples of all the other famous religious groups do? Something seems way off with your followers Jesus? Tell us why!

Jesus could have said simply because your fasts are bogus. But Jesus being Jesus gives a much better answer than I would of given!

To One Question Jesus gives three distinct answers, let's listen in on the first answer:

Jesus answered, "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.

Jesus shares this truth about Himself and What God is Doing:

The New Kingdom Looks Like a Wedding

The New Kingdom looks like a wedding. Simply put Jesus says that when the bridegroom is around you celebrate. He asks, "Do people fast during the bridegroom's wedding banquet?" Simple Answer: A big fat NO. Also we should notice Jesus knows his audience. He knows part of the audience is John's disciples. He uses one of the very titles that John used of Jesus, bridegroom. Jesus reminds them of John's own teaching while answering the question.

The truth is you do not fast at a wedding. This new kingdom looks like a wedding and it is a time for joy and celebration, also known as having a huge party. An interesting part of the answer is that Jesus gives a brief allusion to the soon coming cross. The time will come when these disciples will fast and mourn. It would only last for three days but it would be three days of fasting and mourning. But for now the new kingdom looks

like a wedding!

The New Kingdom Wears Like An Expensive New Suit

"No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse.

Jesus tells us that the new kingdom wears like an expensive new suit. That's not the exact metaphor but very similar. A few years ago I was performing a wedding for two close friends at our local church. It was the first wedding I had performed for the summer so I decided it is summer time, time to get a new suit. I went to the local suit store and purchased a brand new light gray suit, new shirt and tie, including new shoes. I was ready for this wedding! Because they were good friends I was looking forward to it just being a great evening.

The wedding went off smoothly and we arrive at the country club banquet hall for the reception. After the evening meal the music started playing and I was in the mood for some dancing. I head to the music area and ask a female friend, hey would you like to dance. We are out on the dance floor and about two minutes into the song I did some silly dance move too fast where I went to the ground and up again and instantly heard a loud rip and tear. At that same moment I also felt a cold mighty wind blowing in a place that it should not of been. I had torn the back inseam on my new suit pants, and I had ripped them good. This was no oops but a huge oh my, what do I do now?

I quickly stood straight up and whispered to my female friend what had just happened. The preacher split his britches! Within a few minutes I snuck and covered out the front door to my car. Luckily I had packed a casual outfit for later. I took that bag, changed, and headed quickly back to the reception. I had been very embarrassed.

The next day I was faced with a question: Could those pants be saved? The answer is no not really. Perhaps someone could try but trying to convince me that it would be never happen again is another story. Would you rip apart the inseam of dress pants you can pretty much forget about wearing those pants again.

This is precisely Jesus' point. You can put a new brand new cloth on and old garment. You will make the tear worse. Meaning simply inappropriate actions can lead to a great deal of destruction.

God was doing something brand new. What God was doing could not just be sewn into what God had already done many years ago. It would not work. In fact it would be disastrous.

Not only does the New Kingdom look like a wedding and wear like an expensive new suit, we also learn this truth:

The New Kingdom Tastes Like A Well-Made Bottle Of Wine

While in ministry training and schooling I ministered to a local community that was famous for their wine-making process. One of the elders at the church I served at grew and made his own wine. I remember spending some hot summer days with this elder just pruning and picking grapes. To be honest it seemed like a never ending job. This elder knew exactly what to look for in a grape and when the grapes would be ready. You did not always pick every grape because it was not ready and yet you always clipped away the grapes that were bad. It was a very precious art in itself. That was just picking the grapes let alone the rest of the process.

The truth is old wine usually tastes better than new wine but if that old bottle was not made well it does not matter it is bad wine. At the same time even the best wine grower will not go through the difficult process of making wine, taste his wine and say this is the best wine I've ever produced and mix it in with his old wine. You cannot do it.

And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins."

This third illustration that Jesus gives and final teaching to these old Whiners is simply about that: old versus new. The old wine does not fit and mix at all with the new wine. The new also does not fit into the old. You cannot take the regime of Jesus and cram it into the old legalistic code, especially the legalistic code redesigned over the years by the

Pharisees. Both the new and the old will be ruined. Jesus understands that the people tend to prefer the old over the new. The teaching of Jesus here goes beyond this metaphor. With Jesus the new Gospel is better than the old Law. People like the old better and that is why these Pharisees and John's disciples are complaining. Jesus has moved the conversation way past the issue of fasting but to the heart of the matter. What they teach and believe and what Jesus is teaching and believes.

Conclusion

What they teach and believe and what Jesus is teaching and believes.

The truth can be seen still today. Today the truth is the gospel is actually very old. People do still tend to feel more comfortable with the law over grace. The law condemns and damns us, but at least the law is in black and white, we know what is expected. Jesus simply just like Matthew, the tax collector, says follow me and we have no assurance of where we will end up, at least in this lifetime. The truth is the Law is dark but where it takes us is certain. The Gospel of Jesus Christ, although liberating, does scare us with all of the infinite expectations along the way.

What Jesus brings is freedom and liberation from bondage of sin. The reason it does this is because Jesus Christ as he told the crowd in our text that soon the bridegroom would be taken away. He was taken to the cross of Calvary. He was taken so that He could die in my place, so that He could pay the price of my sin. He died so that I may live.

Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15

I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

"Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Our victory is only in Jesus Christ. It is only in Christ crucified that I am saved by His grace through faith. For three days those disciples fasted and mourned because the bridegroom was gone. But on the the third day He rose from that grave and now reigns at the right hand of God. Now we have all the more reason to celebrate because our

victory is in Christ Jesus and belongs only to Him. Amen.

Let me close with this thought to the church: Why are you fasting? Why are you relying on your works, your good deeds, why are you relying on what you do to save you? It will not. You are relying on something that is very very old and saved not a single soul. Today church if you can hear the Spirit's voice, Repent and believe the good news of Jesus Christ.