

Luke 5:33-39 (NIV)

33 They said to him, “John's disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking.” 34 Jesus answered, “Can you make the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? 35 But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast.” 36 He told them this parable: “No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. 37 And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, 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. 39 And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, ‘The old is better.’”

42-05-03-New Wineskins

change, newness, church structure, rigidity

Luke 5:33-39

The changeless Gospel changes its dress to fit the occasion.

INTRODUCTION:

–God is changeless. In creation, *nothing is permanent but the Gospel*. **Change** has different *meanings*: **change for its own sake** is *boredom*; **for personal gain**, it's *selfishness*; **for efficiency**, it's *progress*; changing our lives for loyalty to truth is *holiness*. Today's **text** deals with change as both spiritual *progress* and a call to *holiness*. But before I get into it, I want to read the **context** in **Luke 5:27-39**. *After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. “Follow me,” Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?” Jesus answered them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”* **Jesus broke the religious taboos** that were helping no one. **He went beyond customs to meet sinners where they are at.** **Hom.idea.** Why? Because...

I. Our Customs Can Get Crusty

- A. Humans beings typically like to set their *familiar customs in religious concrete*– (**v.33**): “John’s disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking.”
1. *Familiar practices aren’t always permanent* [**Ongoing souls** live in *changing bodies*, but our *changes in activity do not define who we are!*]
 2. [**Thomas Carlyle**: “Change, indeed, is painful, yet ever needful; and if memory have its force and worth, so also has hope.”] **Memorable customs here may be worthwhile**, but *our hope lies in the hereafter*– **Rev 21:5a**, He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!”
 3. **Growth requires change** [**We’ll draw stick figures** all our lives, unless we learn to draw from real models; **Truman Lee**’s *nude* in the gallery: a lady at our church told me she was mortified. I mentioned the Sistine Chapel....]
- B. **Religiously comfortable customs may not fit divine circumstances**
– **v.34-35**, Jesus answered, “Can you make the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast.”
1. **The changeless Gospel changes its dress to fit the occasion.** [**A**

bride is still a bride when she takes off her wedding gown. She remains a bride when dressed for kitchen or gardening, or is undressed for a bath.]

2. Customs must be informed by context [Hudson Taylor exchanged his Western dress for Chinese clothing to fit in as a missionary; Catholic Bishop Alejandro Labaca went beyond this, adopting the nudity of the Huaorani Indians in Ecuador. He said, “*Blessed are the Missionaries who have a deep enough tan to stand the tropical sun.*” He died a martyr in 1987.]

TRANS: Social context isn’t why we abandon a familiar custom. Our ultimate context is how God shows us to bring the Gospel to the lost.

II. Our Convictions Must Conform to Truth (Jesus illustrated this.)

- A. His 1st illustration was spiritual renewal vs. structural preservation – v.36, *He told them this parable: “No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old.*
 1. “*That old garment has sentimental value! Let’s preserve it!*” But Jesus shows it as a barrier isolating us from reaching the lost.
 2. The Jews hoped their customs would keep them pure in a fallen world; God’s goal was to save that world through His Son.
- B. His 2nd illustration was fresh provision vs. familiar receptacles – v.37, *And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined.*
 1. The Gospel was brand new wine – Heb 10:19-20, Therefore, brothers, ...we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body...
 2. God keeps the new wine fresh in fresh packages–
 - a. [Old wineskins, saturated with yeast, caused new wine to ferment rapidly and prematurely lose its sweetness.] New Christians can lose their sweet vitality by trying to stay close to God through legalistic practices rather than through personal love and devotion.
 - b. [Old wineskins had been previously stretched to their limit; only new skins were pliable enough to contain the expansion of the fresh new wine.]

TRANS: All customs and convictions, old or new, must conform to truth. [Tryon Edwards: “*To cast away the old is not of necessity to obtain the new.... That a thing is new does not of course commend; that it is old does not discredit. The test question is, ‘Is it true or good?’*”] This is why Jesus drew attention to the wine itself, because...

III. Conforming to Gospel Change is a Critical Challenge

- A. There’s always the risk of mellow immobility, – v.39, *...no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, ‘The old is better.’*
 1. Some silently resolve not to change [Stubborn donkeys don’t budge.]
 2. Some strongly react [An old cigarette ad: “*I’d rather fight than switch!*”]
- B. But Jesus exemplified miraculous mobilization – v.38, *new wine must be poured into new wineskins. (befriending “tax collectors and ‘sinners’”)*
 1. The new wine is the Holy Spirit–
 - a. When the Spirit fell at Pentecost, mocking bystanders said (KJV), “These men are full of new wine.” [Older wine was usually sipped; new, sweet wine was taken in larger quantities.] (They assumed the disciples were “full of new wine,” and in God’s eyes, they were!)
 - b. A commitment to old tastes and preferences will narrow and compartmentalize our lives. (Experiencing the new wine of a vital, personal relationship with God will pervade all of life and overflow into the lives of others!)
 2. The flexible, stretchable reservoir for the new wine of the Holy Spirit is discipleship (our response to Christ’s “*Follow Me*”):
 - a. Our lives won’t be the new wineskins God wants, if we focus on the callings of other disciples – John 21:21-22, When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?” Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.”
 - b. Our lives won’t be the new wineskins God wants, if we focus on secular or sometimes even religious protocols for us – Mat 8:21-22, Another disciple said to him, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” But Jesus told him, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”

CONCLUSION:

–The beauty of the Incarnation is that the Infinite God took on the flesh of finite man. For 33 years He wore a Jewish outfit. For the next few centuries He wore Greek and Roman dress. Today He walks the world in the garments of all cultures. **The changeless Gospel changes its dress to fit the occasion.** As His disciples, we are called to the same incarnational adjustment to bring the new wine of the Gospel to a lost world thirsting for it. God’s personal question to us is this: “Are we willing to change what’s comfortable in order to bring the Gospel to the “*tax collectors and ‘sinners’*” of today?”