**New Wine into New Wineskins**

Luke 5:33-39

KV 5:38 **“**No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins.”

Hello! How are you? Most of you may know me through my life testimony at last conference. Do you remember how many times I have moved since marriage? If you had fallen asleep during my testimony sharing, it is just fine. You have lost nothing because it is very boring anyway. If someone does not know me, let me introduce myself. My name is David Min. For a living I am a pharmacist and I am teaching pharmacy students in the college. However, today’s topic is not about drugs or pharmacology. Instead, today, I‘d like to talk about fasting and wine or wineskins. You know I am one of the oldest wineskins in this congregation. If you don’t know what I mean, don’t worry. I will try to explain in a minute.

Last few weeks, we have studied Luke chapter 5. Chapter 5 shows Jesus’ early Galilean ministry. So far, we see Jesus’ ministry is quite different from those traditional ways or other religious leaders at that time. Jesus neither chose his disciples from anyone who received the theological training or known religious elite group such as Pharisees, nor from any priestly family. All of his disciples consisted of ordinary, everyday men, most likely very undisciplined fishers or even the tax-collector. However, Jesus taught the people with the word of God with authority and healed many sick people including lepers, paralytics or even the possessed. Not only that, he often eats and drinks with these people, which made the elite traditional religious leaders very uncomfortable.

Last week, we learned that Jesus called the tax-collector named, Levi. Most people especially the Pharisees hated the tax-collectors. The tax-collector at that time is not like modern day IRS men like missionary David Cho. Instead, they were just like a modern day, drug dealers, who do anything for making money. They were, indeed, slaves of money. Levi was one of them. He was so depressed because everybody hated him. So when Jesus called him, he was so happy that he immediately left everything and followed Jesus. Not only that, he invited all his tax-collector friends as well as Jesus and his disciples to his house and had a great banquet. Let’s see what happened.

1. Fasting and Wedding Banquet (33-35)

Look at verse 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.”

As I said, Jesus and his disciples were invited to Levi’s house and enjoyed a great banquet. Probably, Levi had prepared for the best food and all of his tax collector friends were invited. While they were enjoying the delicious food, the Pharisees complained to Jesus. “John’s disciples often fast and pray, and so do us the Pharisees, but you and your disciples go on only eating and drinking.” Are you guys gluttony or drunkards, aren’t you?

Who were the Pharisees? As we know, the word “Pharisee” is derived from Latin pharisaus, meaning “set apart”. They were proud of being “set apart” from the worldly people, especially the tax-collectors, sinners or Gentiles. They advocated for return to the laws of Moses and stick to the Jewish traditions. We know there was another sect of religious group called “the Sadducees” at that time. They were aristocratic priestly class and they were pretty corrupted and tainted by foreign cultural influence. They did not believe the resurrection of the dead. On the other hand, the Pharisees were proud of strictly observing the laws and made many regulations as guideline how to follow the law carefully. Their religious practice were admired and respected by some common people, however, their inner hearts were empty and their practice tended to enjoy their privilege and sometimes, hypocritical. Jesus’ new ministry threatened their prestige as a religious leader. In the gospel, they often crashed with Jesus and strongly opposed Jesus’ ministry. Jesus rebuked them harshly in the gospel many times.

In the case of fasting, the Pharisees were zealous for fasting, and they fast not just one time, but two times a week, usually Monday and Thursday. Maybe the Levi’s great banquet was held on one of the Pharisees’ fasting day either Monday or Thursday. When we are hungry, we easily become cranky.

When it comes to religious practices like fasting and worship, Jesus is not like the Pharisees, or even like his forerunner John the Baptist. He did not hang out with the pious Pharisees or intellectual teachers of the law. Instead, he often hangs out with outcasts and sick people. He seems to be more joyful when he eats and drinks with terrible sinners when they repent.

Then, what is fasting and why do people fast? Fasting is act of willing abstinence of food for special purpose. The appetite is one of the strong physical desires and eating gives us so much instant pleasures and satisfaction, so fasting is not easy for the ordinary people like me. There are many reasons for fasting, but religiously, it is a sign of abstinence from our flesh desires and focus on God. It is an expression of our desire for the closer intimacy with God by abstaining from our physical pleasure. During fasting, people often abstain from other pleasures such as sex, too. The ancient practice of fasting had been strongly encouraged in the old testaments. It was a highly regarded act of worship to God. The Day of Atonement was celebrated with a fast (Lev 16:29, 31). A four-day fast commemorated the fall of Jerusalem (Zech 7:3, 5; 8:19). Fasts also could be expression of acts of repentance (1 Kings 21:27; Is 58:1-9) or could be associated with deep mourning of our sins (Esther 4:3). Also, fasts are serious expressions of worship and dedication to God. In fact, our Lord Jesus fasted 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness in preparing for his messianic ministry.

Look at Matthew 2:1-2 “*Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.”*

Also, we often do fast for special prayer topics and petition to God. Look at Act 13:3 *“And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”* When the church in Antioch was preparing for sending Barnabas and Saul as their first missionaries to the Gentile world, they fasted and prayed together earnestly for this important historical event and they sent them away.

Then, what is Jesus’ answer about their questions? Look at v. 34 *“Jesus answered*, *“Can you make the friends 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.”*

Jesus did not deny fasting practice or its virtue. However, his simple answer was that now is not the time for fasting but for celebration. Everything in this world has its time. He compares himself to a bridegroom at the time of his wedding. God gave us his one and only son, Jesus, as our savior. His presence in the world marks the beginning of a new era. You do not mourn and fast at a wedding, do you? Many of us enjoyed a great food at Shep. Andrew’s wedding last week. If someone wants to fast, how he or she should fast? Look at Matthew 6:16-18. *16 “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”*

If anyone wants to fast, he or she should not announce the fasting and show it off. He or she should fast at his or her own room quietly. He or she should not show off his fasting especially in the wedding banquet.

We are all invited to the great wedding banquet as friends of the bridegroom, so we should celebrate and enjoy this precious occasion.

In the Bible, the relationship between the Israelites or the believers and God is often compared to the marriage or wedding. Let’s look at Matthew 22:1-2. *“Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: 2 “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son.”*

The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. We all are invited for this great wedding banquet as a guest of honor. Jesus is saying that the present is a special time to celebrate the arrival of a new history in God's salvation plan. God promised that he would send his son as a messiah and we have been waiting for him for a long time and finally, the God’s promise was fulfilled as Jesus came. So we should celebrate for this great occasion. According to Romans, not just human beings but all creatures on earth are longing for the ultimate redemption that the bridegroom's arrival would bring (Rom 8:17-30).

What does it mean? This means when we have Jesus in our heart, we don’t have to fast or mourn. Instead, we should have a full of joy and thanksgiving. We should enjoy the Lord, our bridegroom. You may ask new bride, Natalka if she would fast when Andrew is with her. Every day, she would prepare for delicious Ukraine dishes and wait for Andrew. However, later, the time inevitably would come when the bridegroom is taken away from our heart because of Satan’s temptation. Our hearts are full of worries and worldly desires instead of our Lord, Jesus. Then, we should mourn and fast for our sinful desires and weaknesses. Jesus does not discourage fasting. When we have Jesus as our bridegroom in our heart, we are in a honeymoon. We should be joyful and celebrate this. What is your time now? Is it a time for you to enjoy the honeymoon with our Lord Jesus, the groom, or is it a time for you to fast and mourn?

1. New wines into new wineskins (36-39)

Look at verses 36-37. *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. 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.*

Jesus does not stop there. He drives home the point that his presence represents something new in God's plan, calling for a new way of ordering the spiritual life. These two parables have same meaning.

First, Jesus and his message are like a new piece of cloth. No experienced seamstress would take a new piece of cloth and patch it into an old garment. Such a patch produces two problems. After first wash, the new cloth will shrink much more than old garment so pull or tear it, and the new pieces of cloth will not match with old garment. The patch that is supposed to fix the hole of the old garment would end up ruining both. This new era Jesus brings simply cannot be mingled to the old tradition or old religious paradigm. We cannot continue to hold our old sinful habit and patch new gospel to it.

When we become a Christian first time, some reason, our lives sometimes do not get better as we expected, but get worse. How come? That is because we try to patch our new life into the old one. We try hard to please our old boss as well as our new one. Then, nobody likes us. We cannot patch a new piece of cloth into old garment because it ruins both of them.

When my father passed away long time ago, I had a dilemma whether we should have a traditional Korean way of funeral. It involves weeping loudly and mourning. In fact, the louder weeping is, the more is praised because it is a sign of deep mourning for the dead. However as a new Christian, I didn’t want to mourn. Instead, I wanted to sing hymns and pray for his soul and celebrate his life. As an eldest son, I got a lot of pressure by the relatives and the family members, especially my grandfather to do it in the traditional way. My mother pleaded me not to upset all the guests and mourners and asked me to compromise. However, I decided that it is the chance to show them I am a Christian and I sang hymns loudly instead of weeping and mourning. Initially, they were very upset, but they eventually accepted me and understood my new life. Since then, they have recognized me as a Christian, and most of them including my mother became Christians. Amen. We cannot patch a piece of new cloth into the old garment. It will ruin both.

The second, a new wine should be poured into new wineskins. The second parable involves wine and wineskins. In the first century, wine was put in the wineskins instead of wine bottles. It was made of goatskin or sheepskin taken from the neck area of the animal. If we put new wine into the old wine skins, it would be disaster, a terrible waste of wine and skins. The old wineskins are firm and not flexible. The new skins are tender. The new wine is still fermenting, produce lots of gas. If we pour the new wine into the old skins, it causes the old wineskins to burst, so both wine and wineskins would then be lost. So new wine should be poured into new wineskins.

There can be no combination between what Jesus brings and the old tradition of Judaism. If we try to compromise and it were tried to mingle together, then, both would be destroyed. It does not deny the value of the Old Testaments. The Old Testaments has its values and promise of God regarding the Messiah. However, accepting a gospel and being a Christian are not to become a Jew, who has to eat only kosher foods and follow the laws and many regulations. Jesus brings a new era and a fresh message from God that cannot be mixed with the old Judaism. The book of Acts describes this struggle between those who wanted to keep the gospel of Jesus in the Judaism frame work and those who wanted to develop the new era of gospel. Some people wanted to make a new Christian to be a Jew and have them to be circumcised and to follow all regulations and the Jewish traditions. However, Apostle Paul fought hard against these people. Look at Galatians 5:1. “*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”*

That’s why the Christianity did not remain as a sect of Judaism, but became the gospel for all people on earth. The gospel is a new way and a new paradigm; it gives new freedom from the practices of the old Judaism. This Judaism requires legalistic observance of the laws, regulations and keeps the tradition and it cannot contain this gospel.

Accepting Jesus needs revolution, not evolution in our hearts. We have to change ourselves completely. In the Bible, this is just like being born again and completely new birth. Look at 1 Peter 1:3-5. *“3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”*

Being born again means new birth into a living hope in the kingdom of God, which is completely new paradigm. Many people in this world want to be rich and famous. However, our hope is not getting rich and living well in this world. That’s why it seems impossible for the Pharisees like Nicodemus to be a born again Christian, but the only Almighty God can do it. It demands complete change of our inner being, which is impossible for us without help of the Holy Spirit. So *new wine must be poured into new wineskins.* Jesus' presence requires a new way, new forms and a new spirit.

As I said, I am one of the representatives of the old wineskins in this congregation. The old wineskin’s characteristics include that they like to teach rather than to learn, they like to avoid sacrifice at any cost. They like to talk rather than listening or acting. They often like to rationalize their actions rather than repent their sins. Their hearts are just like a brick wall and are no response to any message and do not show much emotion or passion and they are sometimes even proud of it. They often say, “Ya, ya, I have done that kind of things many, many time in the past” “I know, I know. They’d never move their fingers. Is it familiar? You got it.

Look at Matthew 23:1-4. *“Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: 2 “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. 3 So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. 4 They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.* 5 *“Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; 6 they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; 7 they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called ‘Rabbi’ by others.”*

Wow! The Pharisees and teachers of the law are exactly like old wineskins I am talking about.

In that sense, I am hopelessly old wineskin, but thank God for giving everyone a new birth into a living hope when he or she repents.

Third, Jesus predicts the possibility of rejection. Look at verse 39. *"No one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, `The old is better.' “This* is probably a warning. Jesus knows that some, especially most old wineskins, will not come to him, because they were satisfied with the wine they had. The taste of the old wine seems better and more comfortable. They don’t want to try new taste, which is uncertain and inconvenient. Nothing would move their hearts because they are, indeed, the old wineskins. Jesus' arrival means a choice between the new wineskins and the old wineskins. What do you want? Do you continue to indulge in the old wine and say the old is better, which lead you to eternal destruction or accept the new wine? It is your choice today!

One word: New wine into new wineskin