

Puzzling Parables

New Cloth and New Wine

June 18, 2017

Welcome to where we're learning to focus on following Christ first and foremost.

How well do you fit Jesus into your life?

Do you fit Jesus into your life ... *or your life into Him?*



We're having dinner with Jesus, Matthew, and a crowd of tax collectors; the worldly tax collectors are at the table, and the religious ones are at the door.

At this dinner **Dr. Jesus offers hope of healing to self-aware sinners, and a dim prognosis to self-righteous down-lookers.** The Pharisaical, Levitical, Temple-tax-collecting, down-lookers in the doorway had two questions for Jesus.



First: *"Why are you eating with sinners?"* To which the Great Physician replied that **it's not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick;** (Mt 9:12) making the case that: **if you disregard a disorder you're disqualified from a cure.**

He goes on to say that **He didn't come to call the "righteous" who'll admit no need for His treatment, but self-aware sinners ready to confess their need and receive a *new life* in Christ.**

The second question was: *"Why are you feasting on a day of fasting?"* To which Dr. Jesus drops the bombshell that He's the prophesied Bridegroom who comes to usher in a whole new kingdom reality.



The reformed religious ruler and Christian-killer, the Apostle Paul, later writes:

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, **all things** have become new. – 2 Cor 5:17 NKJ

It's all or nothing; so, you got'a be bold to reject the old.

This required an incredible *expanding of Paul's understanding*, to allow him to see how the complexity of Scripture is completed so simply in Christ. Because, **the Pharisees' complicated religious system, patched with hundreds of added regulations, was too rigid to reduce.**

This is why Jesus' two parables are *so brilliant!*



The first item *shrinks* while the second *expands*, yet both require pliability in God's hands.

The more we see *His Word, this world, and our life*, through the lens of the Lamb, the smaller and simpler *everything* becomes.

Paul defends himself to the Corinthians, saying:

... we conducted ourselves in the world in **simplicity** [*haplotēs: singleness*] and **godly sincerity**, [*eilikrineia: purity*] not with **fleshly wisdom** [*man's natural affinity for complexity and impurity and hypocrisy*] ... – 2 Corinthians 1:12b NKJ

Jesus had a way of simplifying massive amounts of information:

"Anyone who has seen Me, has seen the Father." (Jn 14:9)

"Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind. And ... Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commands." (Mt 22:37-40)

Paul later writes in the same letter to the Corinthian believers:

I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so **your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.** – 2 Corinthians 11:3 NKJ

How? **By trying to patch Him into our old well-established ways.**

Jesus didn't go to the cross just to become another patch on a worn-out but well-known way of living. He came to replace it.

No one tears a patch from a new garment [**We can't pick and choose from Jesus' commands; it's all or nothing**] and sews **unshrunk cloth** [that continues to simplify as we seek Him with sincerity] **on an old garment**, [or a well-established way of living] **for** if he does, the new piece [like divided loyalty] **will pull away from the old**, [fleshly ways] **making the tear worse** [**the more we grow in Jesus while hanging onto those old, comfy, snugly, sins**]. he will have torn the new garment, [God's gracious gift] and the patch from the new [covenant of salvation by grace through grateful, obedient, faith in Christ] will not match the old. – Mt 9:16; Mk 2:21; Lk 5:36 NIV

So, do you fit Jesus into your life, or your life into Him?

Because, if it's the first one, you'll be torn between the two.

Any old clothes that clash have to be trashed.

Otherwise, **complexity, impurity, and hypocrisy will increase as old ways tug-o-war with our new reality ... until something gives.**

And, with this in mind, Paul writes:



... it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. ... put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh ... – Romans 13:11b-14a NKJ



You see, **Jesus doesn't just patch things up; He transforms them into His own image.**

On the red carpet, the stars are asked who they're wearing. So, who are *you* wearing?

Who are you wrapped in as you face the day?

Jesus came to utterly transform us by the renewing of our minds.

And, in *this way* the shrinking garment is like expanding wine.

Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. [They're unyielding, inflexible, brittle, and stubborn] If they do, the new wine [that increases daily in light and life] will burst the skins, [something's got'a give] the wine will run out and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. [You'll be miserable on both fronts: failing to walk in the new and ashamed to walk in the old] No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved. ["For whoever desires to save his (old) life will lose it, but whoever loses his (old) life for My sake will find it (made new, expanding in understanding and shrinking in complexity, impurity, and hypocrisy)."] (Mt 16:25)] And [sadly, just like that well-worn T-shirt] no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, 'The old is better.' – Mt 9:17; Mk 2:22; Lk 5:37-39 NIV



Because, it doesn't require us to wake up, cast off the works of darkness, put on the armor of light, and guard against the flesh.

Old wine is just fine with keeping things *as is*.

In the hand of the Lord is a cup full of foaming wine mixed with spices; [also called "*the wine of confusion*" (Ps 60:3)] he pours it out, and all the wicked of the earth drink it down to its very dregs. – Psalm 75:8 NIV

That's the old wine. And, **throughout Scripture it's used as a symbol of God's wrath bringing chaos and confusion into the lives of the wicked.**

Jesus breaks this curse for us with the new wine of His blood.

But, **He can't pour His new life into our old ways.**

So, He challenges us to take up our cross daily, and follow Him in obedience, so that we can be stretched into His image.

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. – Ephesians 4:20-24 NIV

These two parables brilliantly, simultaneously, demonstrate how the religious rulers prevented the enormous weight of the Law from shrinking, by refusing to let Jesus expand their thinking.

How often do you renew your mind with His Word?

Is He your framework for life itself?

Or, are you influenced more by our culture than our Creator?

So many fit faith into their life the way we do career, family, friends, traveling, sports, and hobbies. For them, **Christ is present in their life, but His lordship is mostly resisted.**

Even if Christ is prominent, there can still be areas, such as work, relationships, and finances, in which **we hold onto our imaginary control out of fear to let go and trust the Doctor.**

But we come *here* to encourage one another to live a life wherein Christ is preeminent.

He's got'a be the central hub that orders and integrates every spoke, and around which every part of our world revolves.

We're not interested in squeezing Jesus into a busy life.

We're learning to focus on following Christ, first and foremost, and fitting every other appropriate aspect into our *true life*.



If Jesus' claims are true, it's the only realistic option.

Every other option is based on the seductive deception that we're not in need of the Good Doctor to direct our every step.

Just remember our dinner with Jesus.

He wasn't eating with those in the doorway who preferred a cup of wrath and frayed apparel.

So, let's wake up, sober up, and put on Christ.