

As we have begun a new year and are living in a different stage of pandemic life, today we are starting a new sermon series called "Divine Reset." This sermon series is about resetting our hearts for a new way of living.

Before diving into today's message, hear what Jesus says in Luke 5:39. I left this verse out intentionally from today's scripture reading for a certain purpose. So, stay with me and listen to what Jesus says here, **"And no one, after drinking old wine wishes for new; for he says, 'The old is good.'"**

Wine Lovers! Help me out here. Which one is better—old wine or new wine? In general, I was told that wine tastes better with age. Occasionally, if desired, you may visit a Lutheran church to have wine for communion 😊 We, Methodists, use grape juice for communion. I am bringing this wine talk now to tell you that today's message is not about old wine or new wine, literally. So, put your thinking cap on with me and see what Jesus is really saying behind the text we are reading in the Bible.

In today's scripture, we see the parable of the new garment and new wine in the context of the conflict encountered by Jesus. I would call these parables of new garments and new wine "the double parable." This double parable is also found in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark (Matthew 9:17; Mark 2:22). The traditional interpretation of the double parable can be summed up in one word—
incompatibility.

It is supposed to teach that the Old and the New are incompatible. It says, "Judaism is incompatible with Christianity." The old is worn and obsolete. The Church must be a new and separate movement, not a patch attempting to prolong the institutions of the Old Covenant. The New Covenant has erased and replaced the Old. This meaning of the double parable seems obvious since it is often taught and preached in that way. Right? Or perhaps not.

If we accept this traditional interpretation without any caution, we are in deep trouble because it is anachronistic. Jesus was not trying to start a new religion, nor was His intention to dismantle Judaism. Jesus was a Jew of the Jews. At the time that Jesus gave these parables of the new garments and new wine, there was no

Christianity, no new religion for Judaism to be incompatible with. When the Gospel writers were recording these parables, the Church Fathers' model of Jesus as an antagonist of the Old Covenant and Judaism had not yet been conceived.

There is no denying that Jesus radically transformed and revolutionized Judaism for His followers. But to attribute the idea of incompatibility to Jesus and His teaching as a way of describing His relationship to Judaism is bad theology. Jesus is not saying that Judaism is bad and Christianity is good. He is not saying that the old is bad and the new is good. No!

The parables of new garments and new wine are not about going against Judaism or old traditions. If we read today's passage in the larger Gospel context of Luke, chapters five and six, we will see that these parables are about Jesus' choice of His disciples. Due to the limited time, I will not go into details. So, I encourage you to read chapters five and six of the Gospel of Luke when you have time. It's fascinating. For now, I will just focus on today's scripture for this message.

Today's scripture starts with Levi holding a banquet for Jesus. Levi, a tax collector, leaves everything and follows Jesus like the fishermen who became Jesus' disciples (Luke 5:1-11). At this banquet, the Pharisees criticize Jesus' disciples. They asked His disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" (vs. 30b). They asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples fast and pray like John's disciples and like our disciples?" (vs. 33, paraphrased). Both questions are criticisms of Jesus' disciples and His choice of company. Jesus replies to the question on fasting with the bridegroom's statements (Luke 5:34-35). And then, He tells the double parable.

Unlike us, the Pharisees probably knew exactly what Jesus meant because they were probably already familiar with the symbolism Jesus employed in His double parable. So, we can find the meaning of the double parable by comparing it with the well-known Pharisaic proverb¹. So, here is what I've found:

- New garments are previously uneducated students.
- Old garments are previously educated students.
- Patch is teaching.
- New wineskins are previously uneducated students.
- Old wineskins are previously educated students.

¹ Flusser, David. 1979. *Do You Prefer New Wine?* Immanuel 9: 26-31.

- New wine is new teaching.
- Old wine is previous teaching.

The meaning of the double parable is that new teaching requires previously uneducated students to be received. Jesus is saying to the Pharisees, "Look, you can't teach an old dog new tricks."

Through the double parable, Jesus is defending His choice of the disciples. With Luke 5:39, Jesus settles His position—"**And no one, after drinking old wine wishes for new; for he says, 'The old is good.'**" This means disciples who have already studied Torah under the Pharisaic schools and have learned to interpret according to those traditions and models are unlikely to be interested in a new approach. Unlikely, they will accept the new way of thinking and living.

Jesus simply says here that those people with an all-knowing attitude will not accept new knowledge, a new way of thinking, or a new way of living. Jesus is challenging us here. Don't be complacent with what we know and what we have been doing. Don't settle in for a status quo. Our God is doing something new in this world, as well as in our lives.

God said to God's people through Prophet Isaiah, "**Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past, Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?**" (Isaiah 43:18). This is a season filled with new opportunities, new discoveries, and we have to be willing to position ourselves and our churches for this new age. It's a time for New Wine. Amen? Amen.