

Unpacking the Parables

Part 2 - New Wine

Introduction

A Parable: an earthly story with a heavenly meaning, a simple story illustrating a profound truth.

Given by Jesus to:

- + To sow a seed of truth
- + To safeguard the secrets of God
- + To highlight God's sovereignty
- + To fulfil prophesy

An invitation and a warning

Danger Zones

From "Oh yeah – that's right – seems obvious" to "Oh... that's me... that's gotta change."

The parable covers three elements: a celebration, old and new clothes, and old and new wine.

The Parable of New Wine/A Question About Fasting

Mark 2:18-22; Matthew 9:14-17; Luke 5:33-39.

Context

The gospels are crafted accounts of Jesus' life for specific audiences.

A Wedding Celebration

Jesus is setting a tone, resetting what the "normal" way of interacting with God should be like.

Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. - Matthew 9:15 (ESV)

God – in Jesus – isn't just coming as saviour or friend, or so on – he's coming as Husband!

Old and New

Keep in mind a few things here that will help us find a good understanding of these parables:

Jesus doesn't want us to just throw out the Old Testament or the former understandings of God.

More powerful here is that Jesus is coming as the fulfilment of an ancient hope, dating all the way back to Abraham.

Clothes

Patching up the problem won't actually fix it, and you end up with more problems than you started with.

Am I still holding on to my old (maybe before-God) life as well as trying this new one in Jesus?

Wine and Wineskins

When old and new interact in ways that they aren't meant to, disaster results, and both old and new are lost.

New Clothes and Fresh Wine!

Like the diversity of people that Jesus healed and ate with either side of this parable, the Kingdom of God is good news for all people!

Everyone's welcome, and the old ways of keeping people out must change.

The old structures aren't the right way to hold the bountiful gift of God that He's longing to pour out.

Response

Three areas to question yourself, in front of God:

- + Am I aware that the bridegroom has come? Do I carry myself with an attitude of celebration?
- + Am I still holding on to the old and the new at the same time? God, are there parts of my old life I'm keeping alive and trying to patch up with my new Jesus-life?
- + Am I more comfortable in the old way of doing things? Ways which might have been good, but now can't handle the new things you're doing? Ways that don't connect with the new people you are bringing? Where do you want me to become soft to you?

Discussion Questions:

1. How has God spoken to you before through the parables of Jesus?
2. How do you go about understanding them?
3. Jesus talks about fasting and celebration. What has been your experience of fasting? What did you learn about yourself and about God?
4. What would it look like for you to fast joyfully in secret?
5. The parable brings up the idea of 'old' and 'new' mixing, and creating problems. Have you ever experienced issues and ideas from your life before Jesus clashing with how we are called to live after coming into a relationship with Jesus? How did that work out? What had to shift?
6. The 'old' and 'new' of the parable could also refer to the ways we've connected to God in the past, and the ways that Jesus made available to us. The Jewish people of Jesus' time had made a relationship with God exclusive, and added a number of conditions to it, whereas Jesus opened it up for everyone. What old ways of religious duty to God have changed as you've experienced Jesus' life? Maybe you have areas that you need to jettison in the light of Jesus' offer of life and freedom (the 'new').
7. Spend some time reflecting on the three areas of questions above, and where God might be offering you the chance to experience fresh life and freedom in Jesus.