



God tells us that Ezra read from the book of the Law,
day after day and that the people of God
were filled with joy!

Friday - Luke 5:33-38 - A parable about a garment and wineskins.

V36. As we considered yesterday, John's disciples were perplexed that Jesus' disciples were apparently disregarding the commonly held Jewish practice of fasting. In response, Jesus turns to something that is well known. A garment and a wineskin. Regarding the garment, the point is easy to understand. No one destroys something that is new to patch something old, especially if, in the process of doing so, you end up with something that looks stupid or doesn't work. Jesus' point is that this practice of fasting to prove your religious diligence to God is like an old garment; and the last thing you want to do is to stitch the new garment (i.e., that which he is bringing) onto it. The new garment must be put on in its entirety.

As to the new wine in the old wineskin, this takes the previous point and develops it. The point of the new cloth patch is to prolong the life of the old garment, but in doing so it creates an eyesore, something that doesn't match. The problem with pouring new wine into an old wineskin is that it won't just match it, it will also destroy the wineskin. Because the new wine is still in the fermentation process, it will cause a build up of pressure, and burst the old wineskin. It's inevitable because the old wine skin, because of its age, has dried out and become inflexible. So, what will happen when the new wine is poured into it? The wineskin will burst and the wine will be lost. Jesus has come to save, through his death on the Cross, the lost. He is not going to allow anything that will result in the loss of his work, especially if it was formerly decreed, and it will be fulfilled through his obedience and death.

V39. As a pastoral point, he tells them, 'people are just not going to get this because the pull to keep things as they have always been, is much stronger than the desire to go with what is new, regardless of the fact that the new is clearly right.' And isn't that the way of human nature. We are all inclined to opt for what we know and become used to. Why the need for change, it served us well in the past? Certainly, some changes are not good, but that does not mean that all change is bad. However there have been seasons of reformation in accordance with God's Word. Times when the church has realised that she needs to walk in a manner more consistently in conformity to God's Word. Such times, granted by the grace of God, are to be welcomed and embraced.

Q1. What was Jesus' point about putting a new patch on an old garment?

Q2. Why can new wine not be put into old wineskins?

Q3. Why is change necessary sometimes, and what should frame whether change is necessary or not?

Thursday - Luke 5:33-38 - A question about fasting.

V33. Jesus is presented with a statement that indirectly asks a question. Matthew (Matthew 9:14ff) and Mark (Mark 2:18ff) both cite it as a question. Who are the questioners? Although Luke doesn't explicitly say, we can deduce from what he does say that they are the disciples of John the Baptist. Matthew in his account clearly states that it is John's disciples, (Matthew 9:14). By this stage, John is in prison (Matthew 3:19), so these men are remaining faithful to him even in his absence. As for the question itself, it concerns the issue of fasting from food and drink. The offering of prayers is also mentioned, probably set prayers at fixed times as was the practice of Jewish disciples, but it doesn't form part of the question.

Note the question isn't asked in a hostile way. They are raising the issue because they are genuinely perplexed. By Law, the Jews were required to fast on at least one day in the year, specifically the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:27). It seems that John's disciples were fasting quite regularly, possibly because they were following the practise of the Pharisees, who, of their own accord, fasted twice a week. The problem for John's disciples is that Jesus' disciples aren't fasting at all. What's interesting is that Jesus' disciples don't have an answer, so they bring the question to Jesus.

V34. Jesus uses an example to answer them, and he presents it in the form of a question. This speaks both to Jesus' mastery of what he knew, and his phenomenal ability as a teacher. It's something he frequently did, because he knew it drew people in. A statement is just that; it's a statement, something you can either take or leave. Asking a question makes it personal. It requires engagement. Of course, if the person sees where you are going with your question, they can try and deflect, but that tells you something about the motive of their original question. It's an approach we should use more often.

V35. In asking his question Jesus wants them to get the point that wedding guests don't fast, they feast. And since his disciples are with him, the Bridegroom, they should be celebrating, not fasting. Jesus is drawing attention to himself for a reason, he is teaching them that he is the Bridegroom who will one day die for His Bride. Yes, the relative imminence of his death is not divulged, but this is the first statement regarding it. On that day, his disciples will not need anyone to prescribe a fast for them.

Of course, we know that Jesus was raised from the grave and that he ascended to Heaven to prepare a place of glory where he and his Bride will dwell together in joy for all eternity. What a wonderful, glorious truth.

Q1. How does Jesus answer the question of John's disciples?

Q2. Why does he ask a question?

Q3. What example does Jesus use? Why does he speak of the bridegroom?

Monday - Luke 5:21-26 – Rise, pick up your bed and walk.

V22. Jesus tells the paralysed man, who has been let down through the roof of Jesus' home in Capernaum, that his sins have been forgiven. A statement which sent shockwaves around the packed house. The Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from the surrounding villages and Jerusalem to hear Jesus teach, can't believe what they have just heard. Of course, they don't say anything but Jesus can see it in their eyes, in the scowling of their faces. They should be reasoning with honest motives, compassionate hearts, but they're not. So, Jesus calls them out. "Which is easier...?" Jesus is asking them to look behind his words and see the power that resides in him. But they're not going to do that. Why not? Because they know where it will take them. They're not going to view Jesus as God, by admitting that he can forgive sin. So, Jesus addresses the issue for them, and he tells the man to do the impossible, 'to rise, pick up his bed and walk.' Only God could heal this man and, as Jesus commands the man to be healed, the point is clear - he is God, and, as such, he can forgive sin.

V25. When this man got to his feet, he did something which everyone watching knew was just humanly impossible. Paralyzed people don't get up and walk. Depending on the type of paralysis, a few people do, through incredible strenuous effort and extreme dedication, regain some level of very limited movement. Such 'miracles' are lauded and rightly so, as huge medical successes. When told to do so this man got up immediately, picked up the bed, walked through the packed house, the people parting like the Red Sea for the crossing of the Israelites, and went home, glorifying God. It is amazing, but with God all things really are possible. Matthew 19:26.

V26. It's interesting though, who were the people who were amazed? Was it everyone in the house and those outside? Were the Pharisees and scribes seized with amazement and glorified God, or was it just those outside and in the man's home when he went there? What do you think? I think it was just those outside and those in the man's home. Why do I think that? Because how could the Pharisees and scribes have been astonished by what Jesus did, and then subsequently pursue him to his death? Matthew also tells us that 'when the crowds saw it...' (Matthew 9:8). The 'crowds' as opposed to the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law. The people who saw what the so called 'godly' men couldn't see. How is that possible? Because the crowds were looking at the reality & through prejudicial eyes, & they could see God's Hand at work.

Q1. After Jesus tells the man 'your sins are forgiven you', what does Jesus tell the man to do?

Q2. Why does Jesus do this?

Q3. What does the man do and how do the crowds respond?

Tuesday - Luke 5:27-32 – Jesus calls Levi to be a disciple.

V27. *The Tax Collector.* "After these things" – Luke, for the first time, in a way links one event to another. The calling of Levi follows the healing of the paralytic man, but not immediately so. Mark tells us that after Jesus healed the paralytic, he went to the lake shore, where he taught the crowd who had followed him (Mark 2:13,14). And it was when he was on his way back home that Jesus stopped at the local tax office, and spoke to Levi, the tax official. These Jewish tax collectors were not liked. Why? Because it was their job to collect the taxes that would be used to finance the Roman occupation. Usually, they would also add on a percentage for themselves, which the Romans didn't care about, as long as they got what they demanded. Having a tax collector in the family was viewed as something to be ashamed of, and such was their reputation that synagogues wouldn't receive their alms offerings, nor could they testify in church courts.

So, when Jesus stops off at the tax collector's office on his way home, people would have been wondering 'what's he going to do?' and straining to try and hear what he's saying. As it transpires, they see nothing untoward, but they do hear something that is startling. Jesus says two words to this Roman conspirator; they are 'Follow me'. Literally in the Greek 'be following me'. In other words, start and keep following me always. Had Jesus and this man Levi met and talked before, or was this just a call out of the blue? It's hard to say, because we're not told. Whatever the case may be, when Jesus calls Levi, he immediately, without a moment's hesitation, leaves his tax office, and follows Jesus. This is incredible. Why would Levi do this? Because he was effectually called by the word of the Lord. Why would Jesus want a man like this as one of his disciples? Because he loved Levi from before the foundation of the world.

V29. *Levi manifests the reality of this conversion.* Levi calls all his tax collector friends and others to a great feast at his home, and it wouldn't have been a condo apartment. The purpose of the feast? He wants his associates and friends to meet Jesus. He wants them to meet the man who had changed his life in a radical and unbelievable way.

Christ builds his church through the preaching of the gospel, and by believers gossiping about their faith to others and inviting them to 'come and see' the Lord. From Andrew telling his brother Simon, "we have found the Messiah", John 1:40ff, to the persecuted Christians speaking to their new Hellenist neighbours in Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, Acts 11:19ff, this is how it has always been done.

Q1. Who did Jesus stop to speak to? Why was this unusual?

Q2. What did Jesus tell Levi to do? How did Levi respond and why?

Q3. What did Levi then do and why did he do it?

Wednesday - Luke 5:27-32 - The hatred of the world revealed.

V30. When Jesus brings people from life to death, there are always those who hate him for it. When the Pharisees and scribes hear the news that Jesus and his disciples have been wined and dined at Levi's house, how do they react? They grumble that Jesus is ignoring the strict rules concerning ceremonial purity. As a rabbi, for Jesus to associate himself with such 'people' would not merely have shown poor judgement, it would have been totally unacceptable to the religious leaders. By eating with them, Jesus was declaring himself to be their friend.

Luke tells us that the Pharisees and scribes expressed their views to Jesus' disciples, but it was really directed at Jesus. It is also interesting how Jesus frames his response, and it tells us a lot about his purpose in coming to earth. These religious leaders thought of themselves as being morally 'healthy', and the tax collectors and sinners as morally 'sick', so Jesus' simply asks, 'why would I not attend to the sick'? Of course, they know full well that Jesus does not accept their estimation of themselves, but that doesn't mean that he is being dishonest. He is simply taking them at their word, accepting their view of themselves for what it is worth and responding based on that.

Jesus' statement that his work is to call sinners to repentance (a theme Luke frequently returns to a lot in this gospel), goes unheeded. These men were quick and didn't hold back when they had something to say about Jesus' behaviour in joining the feast at Levi's. But when Jesus challenges them on it, in a simple clear way, they have no response. They have nothing to say.

That's the way the world works. It will be quick to point the finger at the believer and say, 'but you said this, or you did that...', while at the same time rejecting the truth about life, God, and eternity. Christianity is simple, honest, and straightforward. That is one of the many beauties about it. It is sin that contorts and distorts life. It is Satan who brings chaos and dysfunctionality, and, ultimately, destruction.

Q1. How did the Pharisees and scribes react to Jesus being at Levi's feast?

Q2. Why did they react in this way?

Q3. What does that tell us about how men really think about Christianity?