

(Luke 5:33~39)

**Why did you come to church this morning?** Why are you here? Are you here because it's Sunday, and you're supposed to go to church on Sunday? Do you tithe...and if so, why? I don't have to ask why those of you who don't, cause it's the same reason all people don't support the ministry...greed, mixed with the love they have for this world, and lack of love for lost souls. But if you do support the church, my question is why? That's just a couple of examples, but you'd be surprised how many people go to church on Sunday morning out of habit or tradition, simply because it's Sunday and that's what you're supposed to do. Everybody needs to go to church...right? You'd be surprised how many "support" the church, but do so out of obligation, rather than desire. Many see tithing as paying a bill, seeing it as a burden.

You'd be surprised...just how many I just described... Let me ask you another question, "Where's the life that Jesus promised, where is that *"abundant life"* he came to give? Point is, I'm afraid many are "missing" the life Jesus came to give, and are caught up in what is known as *"Legalism!"* Legalism, or *"Religion,"* is a burden... (*Mt. 11 Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden...*)

The picture there is that of a *"yoke of burden."* It pictures the burden the Law places upon men. A burden that is lifted when Christ sets us free! This matter of Legalism and Liberty has been one of much debate over the centuries, beginning back in the days of Christ when he first introduced it. Not only debated, but greatly misunderstood. Jesus came to set us free from legalism. He didn't come to impose more rules and commandments to burden us down; *he came to give us life!* He accomplishes this by setting us free from the Law. Jesus' message was that of *"Freedom from the Law,"* often referred to in scripture as our *"Liberty in the Lord."* Liberty has been greatly misunderstood. Many have taken *"Liberty"* to mean to be a *"License to sin,"* that you can live how you want and still be just with God. God forbid. (*1Peter 2:16...not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness...*)

Liberty is not *"Freedom to Sin"* but *"Freedom from Sin."* Liberty is best understood as the result of a changed heart! Through the love of God, manifested on the cross, God changes the hearts of his people, setting them free from the Law! The law is no longer needed, in that now, as a result of the grace of God in their life, their greatest desire is to serve God willingly...

*Here we have the question of fasting...Specifically, as to why the disciples of Jesus did not fast.* This question of fasting appears to be the second of two questions directed at Jesus as a result of his going to Levi's house, to share in a meal with him and some of his friends. We are told back in verse 29, that as a result of inviting Levi to come follow him, that Levi invited Jesus over to his house for a celebration of sorts, to share in a feast with some of his friends. As a result of that, the Scribes and Pharisees began murmuring (complaining), and asked Jesus the first of what would be two questions.

The first question was, (Vs 30) *"Why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners?"*

The second question coming out of his eating with Levi was, (Vs 33) *"Why do your disciples not fast?"*

Their first question dealt with WHO they were eating with, while the second addresses the matter as to WHY they were even eating. It's like... *What are you doing here eating with these kinds of people, and for that matter, why are you even eating? Why are you not fasting like both the disciples of John and the Pharisee's do?*

Considering the line of questioning, it appears quiet clear that Jesus and his disciples had attended this feast at Levi's house, on *one of the two prescribed days of fasting* for the orthodox Jew. For the orthodox Jew, *two days out of every week* (Monday & Thursday) were set-aside for prayer and fasting. This was in keeping with the tradition that Moses went up into Mount Sinai on Monday and returned on Thursday. It's important to note, that these *"fastings"* were not in keeping with the commandments of God, but the

traditions of men. God only prescribed one fast, the one on *Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement*. This Jewish holyday was held once a year, on the tenth day of the seventh month, and was a day when the priest would enter the holy of holies to offer up a sacrifice for the sins of the entire nation. Concerning this day, God declared a national fast in honor of this holy day.

Besides the fast commanded on Yom Kippur, there were no other commandments regarding fasting. The fasting that is in view here, was a result of tradition, not commandment. Somewhere down the line, someone suggested the idea, that they ought to set aside a specific day, for the sole purpose of seeking God's face, a time of spiritual renewal. A day when they set aside carnal desires, and give themselves totally to spiritual matters. And no doubt, somehow it evolved into two days a week, and someone suggested that they set aside Monday's and Thursday's, in honor of the days when Moses went up on Mt. Sinai, and the day he came back down. Now, I'm sure, like every other tradition ever started, that it started out with good intentions, and was very likely beneficial in the beginning. No doubt, in the beginning they saw some good things come out of these special days, no doubt some were spiritually renewed. But as with all traditions, as time goes on, they become burdensome, and binding. They basically turn into "*legalistic ritual*."

That's pretty much the scenario here, fasting had become a tradition, one so ingrained in them, that just because Jesus and his disciples didn't fast, they were considered gluttons, sinning against God!

It'd be interesting to consider how much goes on in the church that not founded on scripture, but are the traditions of men. Churches have devolved dress codes, dictating the way people must dress, what constitutes worship and what does not, where you can go and can't go. Basically making the life of following Christ a burden, shackling them with the traditions of men! Traditions more often than not, put people into bondage. Once you start them; they become all but impossible to stop. You become obligated to them, you develop a mindset that it is considered WRONG to do contrary. You're kind of "*Locked-in*" to it... *We've done it this way for 30 years*...

Churches are being divided over the kind of music and songs being used. Beloved, God did not ordain the Baptist Hymnal. These things are all personal preferences. It don't make you a "*heathen*" just because you listen to "*Big Daddy Weave*," "*Tolby Mac*," my all time favorite, "*Third Day*." You may not like it, you may consider it ungodly...but don't condemn me for listening to it.

John's disciples fast and pray...as do the Pharisee's, but in stark contrast to both of them, rather than "*fasting*"...you guys are "*feasting*." (Vs 30...a great *feast*) Both John's and the Pharisees disciples, go all day without a single bite to eat, while you guys are here indulging yourselves!

(Vs 34~35) Jesus answers them, once again in metaphor language, just as he did their previous question as to why he ate with publicans and sinners. ... <sup>34</sup>*And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?* <sup>35</sup>*But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.*

He answers their question as to why they do not fast by using the analogy of a wedding celebration. The "*children of the bridechamber*" refers to the grooms closet and most intimate friends that were invited to share in this weeklong celebration. Weddings were times of extravagant festivities and celebration, with music, dancing, extravagant amounts of food and drink, climaxing at the end of the week with actual marriage ceremony.

In this analogy, *the children of the bridegroom* represent his disciples, while Jesus is represented as the bridegroom. With the point being, the reason my disciples do not fast, is for the fact that now is not the time for fasting, but rather the time for rejoicing! What point would it serve to fast and pray; to seek the

face of God, when the very one you're seeking is standing right in front of you? You wouldn't mourn and fast at a wedding celebration would you? Why should my disciples do so, while I stand in their midst?

Jesus goes on to declare, there will be a time when they shall fast...<sup>35</sup> *But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.* Notice that Jesus says that the bridegroom will be "taken away" from them... Taken away" is from *apairo*, which carries the idea of *sudden removal*, of being *snatched away violently*. This is the first hint of his impending crucifixion. Jesus says that the day is coming when the bridegroom will be violently taken away from them, and that then would be a time of mourning, the time of fasting. But now is a time of rejoicing, a time of celebration.

It becomes quickly apparent, that they are going to call into question, many of the things that he and his disciples do, that go against *their teachings*. Here in chapter five alone, their first encounter with him, they have already called him into question, three different times. They questioned as to who he thought he was to forgive sin? They questioned as to why he ate with publicans and sinners. Now here, they question him as to why he and his disciples do not fast. Aware of the fact that they are going to call him into question on many things, because it goes against what they believe, Jesus gives a couple of parables that make it clear, *that his ways and their ways* have nothing in common...

<sup>36</sup>And he spake also a parable unto them; **No man puts a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new makes a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agrees not with the old.** <sup>37</sup>And no man puts new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. <sup>38</sup>But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved.

The first parable he offers speaks to uselessness of "Patching a hole" in an old garment, with a piece of new material. Cloth of that day was primarily wool or linen, and both would shrink when washed. Jesus simply reminds them, that if a patch of new, unshrunk, cloth is sewn on an old garment, the first time the garment is washed, the new patch shrinks and pulls away from the garment, making a worse tear than before. The point being, the new and the old are mutually incompatible... They cannot be mixed.

To enforce his point, he offers a second parable, that teaches the same principle...

<sup>37</sup>And no man puts new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. <sup>38</sup>But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved.

Once again, we see the clear principle that you cannot mix the new with the old... Here Jesus uses the analogy of putting new wine into old bottles. It's important to understand, that in saying bottles, he is not referring to glass bottles of our day, but rather to wineskins. Wineskins refer to the hide or skin of animals that were used to contain the wine. The hide would be uncut except at the legs and neck, and sometimes would be turned inside out. The leg openings would be stitched closed and sealed, and the neck was used as a spout, which was tied with a leather thong or string.

The problem with using an old wineskin, was due to two things, the fermentation process of wine and the fact that previously used skins have had time to become hardened and brittle. If you were to place new wine in an old wineskin, the fermentation part of the process, caused the wineskin to expand, and if it was an old one, rather than stretch, it would break, spilling its contents on the ground, losing everything. The only suitable container for new wine is a fresh wineskin...

The point of these two parables is the same, to show the incompatibility of the old and the new. Using the illustration of the garment, Jesus wanted to make it clear, that he had not come to "mend" the old system. He had not come to reform the old system, by "Patching things up"... Rather than come to "patch up the old," Jesus brings a *whole new garment*.

Using the illustration of the wineskins, Jesus was saying that this new way of life he is offering is not compatible with the old way of life, lived under the law! The life that Jesus came to give required the old life to be set aside for a new life! It epitomizes what Christ meant when he said, “*Ye must be born again!*” The only life that can contain *true righteousness* is the new life given by God when a person repents of his sin and trusts in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Jesus came to bring a whole new way of life, an entirely new way of worship, one that was completely incompatible with the existing way of worship, under the Law. He came to set men free from the bonds of legalism! His would not be filled with rituals, traditions, ceremonies, and on and on. Jesus came bringing true spiritual worship, setting men free from the bonds of legalism, through a personal relationship with the Father through him.

It would require them to relinquish their old ways of thinking, their old ways of belief to receive the new! You can't mix legalism and grace, both are destroyed.

Now Jesus knew, that this new way of life he was teach, would not be readily excepted, especially for those he was talking to here. In verse 39, Jesus makes a comment to the difficulty of change to the new...

<sup>39</sup>**No man also having drunk old *wine* straightway desires new: for he saith, The old is better.**

Here, Jesus simply affirms man's natural reluctance to change... Man naturally does not like change.

**(Illustration: Drink)** It speaks of the difficulty of getting a man that has drank a particular brand of drink for most of his life, to switch to something new. When he first taste of the new, he will usually say that he likes the old one better.

The point here is that those under the old covenant will be reluctant to accept what Jesus has to offer. The rituals, their religious beliefs are so ingrained in them that it is extremely difficult to get them to change. And as a result, many could not accept Christ.

The message this morning is this...Christ came to give life...and life more abundantly. He didn't come to institute another religion, he didn't come to start another denomination, he came to give us life! The question this morning is, are you enjoying the life he gives. It's obvious you're here this morning, but that doesn't mean you are partaking in the life he brings. You may come this morning simply because it's Sunday morning, and everybody needs to go to church...right.

Listen, the best thing some of you might do this morning is “Quit Church.” By that I mean quit “*Going to Church*,” and start “*Following Christ*.” Truth is, church can't bring you life, the church doesn't have the life, the life is found in the Lord of the church. We come to church to learn more and grow closer to the Lord of the Church... So there may be some here who need to “Quit Church,” and start walking with Christ.