

Elizabeth Dixon

Professor Notley

Parables

18 April 2023

Parable- New Wine in Old Wineskins

Jesus' parable about new wine in old wineskins, which can be found in Matthew 9:17, Mark 2:22, and Luke 5:37-39, can sound confusing for anyone unfamiliar with Jesus' time period and the audience to whom He was speaking this parable. Back in Jesus' day, people would use the skin of animals, like goat skin, for example, to store liquids. Wine, being a fermented drink, would expand within the wineskins. An old wineskin would already be expanded and stretched to its limit, so by placing new wine within the old wineskin, it would tear the seams. Therefore, new wine had only to be preserved in a new wineskin, otherwise, the wine and the wineskin would be damaged if new wine were put into an old wineskin. The message behind this parable wasn't just to tell people not to put new wine in old wineskins, Jesus' message through speaking this parable was much more than that. Through His parable, Jesus shares how He has come to bring something new.

In the gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus' parable is shared and written through the account of each author. All are very similar, but it is important to note some of the differences in how each is written. This is how the parable reads in the gospel of Matthew 9:17, "Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved." The

principle of this parable speaks to the fact that since the Messiah is here, the way in which the church operates is different now. In a commentary from David Guzik from Enduring Word, Guzik shares how with this illustration of the wineskins, Jesus explains how He did not come to repair or reform the old institutions of Judaism. Instead, He came to institute a new covenant altogether.

When Jesus speaks about His reference to wineskins, He was announcing how the present institutions of Judaism could not and would not contain His “new wine”. The church, the new institution He was speaking of, included both Jews and Gentiles together. Instead of destroying the law of the old institution of Judaism, Jesus comes to fulfill the law, which will be discussed later. Guzik makes a reference to that of an acorn and an oak tree, and how an acorn is fulfilled when it grows into an oak tree. “There is a sense in which the acorn is gone, but its purpose is fulfilled in greatness.” (Guzik) This imagery gives a good understanding of what Jesus’ work has done and accomplished.

In the gospel of Mark now, the parable in chapter two, verse twenty-two says, “And no one puts new wine into old wineskins, or else the new wine bursts the wineskin, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins. This is very similar to how Matthew shares this parable in his gospel, but the only difference in Mark's account is that he doesn't mention how both wine and wineskin are preserved as when putting new wine in new wineskin preserves both. Then in Luke 5:37-39, we see, “And no one puts new wine into old wineskins, or else the new wine will burst the wineskins, and be spilled, and the wineskins ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, ‘the old is better’”. In the last

verse of Luke's account of Jesus' parable, "And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, 'the old is better.'" this particular verse speaks of how there will be some people who find comfort in the old because it's familiar and what they're used to, so it can be difficult to welcome with open arms something that's new. Jesus came to bring something new, He came to fulfill and make new what already was. The new spirit can not inhibit and take place in your old-natured body. This means that once you have entered living a new life with Jesus in your heart, you must let go of the old self, and allow Jesus to reign and rule in you, in your heart, and in your mind.

Jesus makes it clear, the old nature of one's self can not hold the new, or else the new will be lost. Jesus can make us new, and take us out of our old condition, just like the old wineskin, which can no longer expand or grow, as the new wineskin can. Because there is a new nature in us, we are not the same but have become a new creation. It is only in the new nature that we can grow, we can expand, and bear good fruits. Jesus loves us just as we are but, He seeks to transform us so that we can become the people He is calling us to be. He also loves us so much that He wants to continually produce new wine within us and in our lives. That new wine can look like a change in how we react and respond to others who may not agree with us, new wine can look like a change of character within us, when we receive this new wine in our lives, it can bring forth good fruits, such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. When it seems like things are hard in life, and we are faced with times of trouble, our attitudes and our responses in the midst of those times, will reveal that new wine kind of spirit in us. Jesus wants us to grow into who He has called us to be. Once we accept who He says we are in Him, we take on those characteristics, we are those things He says

that we are, if He says that we are made new in Him, then we are made new in Him. If He says that we belong and that we are His children, His sons, and daughters, then we should live our lives and act in a way that shows that we indeed do belong to Him. We need to learn how to walk in that. Romans 8:14 says, "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." So it is our actions in how we are allowing ourselves to be led by that calls us to identify as being sons and daughters of God. 2 Corinthians 6:18, And I will be a Father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me, says the Lord Almighty." Here God Himself is telling us who we are in Him, it affirms our belonging to Him. We are His children and we have every right to act like His children. We have the freedom to come to Him all the time, to ask Him for what we need, we can go to Him to voice our worries and frustrations, He wants and He longs for our communion with Him. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" 2 Corinthians 5:17. Just like in the parable about new wine in old wineskins, the old man's nature has gone away once we are living in Christ, once we choose to live a life after Gods own heart, is when true transformation begins to take hold in one's life.

One can say that the central message of this parable was that of incompatibility between Jesus' new covenant and the traditional practices of Judaism. The new message that Jesus was bringing could not be contained within the frameworks of the old traditional religious practices of Judaism. We are invited to take on a posture of openness and flexibility so that we can be able to receive new teachings. It also shares with us the whole concept of change and renewal in one's own spiritual life.

Our sinful nature can be comfortable because we become so accustomed to living in that sort of nature, after all, it's natural for us to sin, but Jesus calls us to put on the full armor of God.

(Ephesians 6:11) We put on this new nature that changes us from the inside out. The old nature must be “put off” and the new nature, “put on”. Jesus gives us the power to choose a new life. He can restore and redeem, and heal, and make things better than they were before. In this parable, it's clear that Jesus wants us to know why He came and also gives those today a glimpse of what He can do in and through our lives, and what He has already done with the church when it comes to making things new.

In his article, “New Wine, Old Wineskins” written by Chris Hartenstein, Hartenstein mentions how this parable is relevant to believers, he says. “A new heart is our new wineskin and a renewed mind and changed actions are our new wine...” A new heart, a renewed mind, and changed actions all signify a changed life. There’s so much freedom in knowing that Jesus gives us a new heart, we can not work that on our own strength, we are His creations and we are His “mess” to deal with. He is the only One who can change lives from the inside out. He is the only One who can give us new wineskin so that He can continue to pour new wine into our lives. Just like the illustration about the acorn becoming an oak tree that Guzik shared in his commentary, that acorn that grew into an oak tree can not go back to becoming that same acorn again, it will always remain an oak tree. Just like Jesus fulfilling the law and making all things new from the institution of Judaism, Jesus wants to do the same with us in our lives. He wants to redeem us, to make us new creations in Him.

Another way Jesus’ parable could be applied to our lives is, knowing that Jesus wants us to endure the process of becoming a new creation in Him, takes lots of discipline. Jill Miller shares in her article on this parable, that we are to trust the law of process so that we can develop and mature daily. She mentions how we should throw away the old wineskins in order for our

spiritual process to not end up in a disaster. This isn't necessarily agreeable. Isaiah 49:16 reminds us of God's love, no matter how badly we think we may "mess up" along the process of growth, we are His creations, we are His "projects" so to speak. Even if we do end up in a disaster, we are His disaster, and there is always hope for renewal and redemption.

The parable of Jesus about new wine can be found in all three of the four gospels. Matthew 9:17, Mark 2:22, and Luke 5:37-39. Here, Jesus is speaking to a people who are so accustomed to learning and practicing the laws of Judaism, and He shares in this metaphor of new wine, how He has come to bring a new message, how He has come to not destroy the old traditional practices of religious Judaism, but rather He has come instead to fulfill the law. Just like how new wine can not be placed in an old wineskin, the new message that Jesus brings can not be contained within the whole framework of what the Pharisees and other religious leaders were practicing.

Jesus shares the idea of being open to letting go of the old so that there can be room for the new to grow. Back then in Jesus' day, the use of goats skin and other animals were sewn together to hold in liquids. Wine, being a fermented drink needs ample room to grow and expand in, so placing new wine, in an old wineskin would cause the old wineskin to tear and break, because it has already been stretched to its limits, which then would waste the new wine, and the old wineskin would also be lost in that process of doing so. This parable can also be seen as a warning. A warning against the dangers of clinging and holding on to old traditions, and old ways of thinking, and having a resistance to change. It's also an invitation to be open to new ideas, new experiences, and new ways of living that align with the principle of the gospel message that Jesus has come to bring. Just like the acorn mentioned earlier, Jesus can transform

and grow us into what He's called us to be. Jesus wants to work in us and through us, because He loves us, and we belong to Him. He wants to produce good fruits in us, so that others may taste and see how good He is.

Works Cited

Guzik, David. "Enduring Word Bible Commentary Luke Media." *Enduring Word*, 31 Oct.

2022, <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/luke->

Hartenstein, Chris. "New Wine, Old Wineskins." *The New Frontier*,

<https://www.thenewfrontierministries.org/blog/2020/04/07/new-wine-old-wineskins>.

Miller , Jill. "New Wine." *Women of Faith*,

<https://www.womenoffaith.com/blog/new-wine>.

Piper , John. "When the Bridegroom Is Taken Away, They Will Fast-with New Wineskins."

Desiring God, 20 Apr. 2023,

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/when-the-bridegroom-is-taken-away-they-will-fast-with-new-wineskins>.