

September 9, 2018
Sunday Morning Service
Series: Luke
Community Baptist Church
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as we prepare to hear from Luke 5:33-39.

1. Compare the “acceptable standard” of the Pharisees with the acceptable standards of religions today.
2. In the illustration about the preacher who skipped a portion of the text, does it really matter that he chose to do that?
3. How often or how long should Christians fast?
4. What did the parable about the new cloth on the old garment illustrate?
5. What did the parable about new wine in old wineskins illustrate?
6. What did the parable about old wine versus new wine illustrate?

CHRIST IS NOT A PATCH
Luke 5:33-39

Jesus Christ, God the Son, was not the first created being and was not an actual brother of Adam (Mormon doctrine). He was not a prophet like Mohammed (Islam doctrine). He was not the founder of a religion in the same vein as Buddha. He was more than a good man, an authoritative teacher, a doer of good deeds. He was not just another Rabbi, albeit a very gifted teacher.

In the context of Jesus and His few disciples attending a banquet offered by the newest disciple Matthew, Jesus pointed out to the grumbling Pharisees that He was not just another teacher similar to themselves. He made it very clear that the circumstances of His life and how His disciples related to those circumstances were not explainable by comparing Him with other human teachers. That was the crux of the problem for the religious leaders all the way to their death. They could never concede to the supernaturalness of Jesus of Nazareth. They could never acknowledge that He was actually God in the flesh. Therefore, they could never accept the “new way” the new religion (as they saw it) that Jesus brought to Israel and the world.

This doubt, this refusal to believe that Jesus is unique, that the truth He taught is absolute, unchanging and non-negotiable abounds in religion today. What is worse is that many people who call themselves “Christian” or even “Evangelical Christians” teach that absolutism regarding the gospel Jesus gave us is unacceptable and divisive. How sad that teachers who are acceptable in evangelical circles insist that we ought to dialogue with teachers from false religions because they are sincerely seeking God also.

Being a seeker of truth is not the same as being changed by the truth. “Every false religion in the world has a base of truth about it. It starts with some truth and then moves away from it subtly and maliciously, though maybe not intentionally.” (A.W. Tozer, *The Purpose of Man*, Grand Rapids: Regal Books, 2009, p.85.) The Pharisees demanded that Jesus come under their authority. They demanded that He be like them, that He conform to their manmade rules. They refused to believe that Jesus was their authority, their creator, and ultimately their judge. He was not like them nor was He like any religion that came before His earthly ministry or after it.

Jesus is unique. His teaching is unique. His truth is unique. It is the one and only means for fallen sinners to be brought into fellowship with their Creator. It is not only unlike all other religions of our day, but all other religious teaching is opposed to the truth Jesus taught. The trend today is for people who claim to be seeking truth, to attempt to add Jesus to their predetermined plans for life and eternity. Jesus is not a patch that can be added to an old garment. He is not an old wineskin into which we can pour new wine. He is the

one and only eternal Bridegroom of the Bride, who is the Church He is building. That truth is not repeated by any manmade religion. That truth cannot be added to any human religion. It is unique and non-negotiable. It is the absolute and eternal truth. Sinners and saints must believe and embrace it.

Jesus Was Not Like Human Teachers (vv.33-35).

Religious people criticized Jesus for not conforming to acceptable standards. Apparently, Jesus didn't understand that the acceptable "standard" for disciples was for them to fast often. *And they said to him, "The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees" (v.33a).* The people identified as "*they* who were complaining" is a reference to the Pharisees and their scribes who grumbled that Jesus was eating with sinners (v.30). But according to Matthew and Mark, this group of critics also included the disciples of John the Baptist. *Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" (Matthew 9:14).* Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. *And people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" (Mark 2:18).*

That reality should cause us to wonder. Why were the disciples of John hanging out with the Pharisees? Was it not true that followers of John the Baptist had been baptized, identified with, repentance from sin? The Pharisees never participated in that important identification. It was not they, but the Pharisees who were the targets of John's scathing rebuke: "*You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits in keeping with repentance" (Luke 3:7b-8a).*

So how do we explain this odd alliance between supposed seekers of truth and religious rebels? Not all of John's disciples were present when John introduced Jesus, told how He must increase, or when He was baptized. Therefore, it is likely that not all of John's disciples were convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, nor did they understand the nature of Messiah and His work. This might be the situation with the "disciples" in Acts 19:1-5 who had been baptized

according to John's teaching but never baptized regarding faith in Christ alone.

Also remember that the issue here was the acceptable expressions of human religion—fasting and prayer. These disciples of John's were likely still looking for Messiah and, being devout Jews, practiced that which identified devoutness. Were they fasting and praying for Messiah to come, like some devout Jews still do? Surely we agree that fasting and praying are very helpful in drawing us to depend on and walk in fellowship with God.

But fellowship with God was not why the Pharisees engaged in fasting and prayer. In fact, there were three specific practices that set the acceptable standard for religious, pious expression: Fasting, ceremonial prayer, giving alms. The Pharisees were notorious for doing all of these things in order to be seen and congratulated by fellow humans (Matthew 6). Actually the only day the Law required fasting was on the Day of Atonement each year (Leviticus 16:29,31). In contrast to the law, the Pharisees set the standard for human religion by fasting twice a week on Monday and Thursday (Luke 18:12). And don't forget that when the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, He began, "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites . . ."

Like many very religious people today, these critics were confident that their traditions determined the acceptable standard for piety, being right with God. It is so easy for me to be convinced that certain practices that help me walk in fellowship with God must be the standard for everyone else. For example, I love to begin the day with quiet time of reading the Bible, praying, and meditating. Does that mean that people who do this sort of thing in the evening are not in fellowship with God? Of course not. But here is the problem. People who never read their Bibles and pray are almost certainly not in fellowship with God because God has stated repeatedly in His word that those basic practices keep us in fellowship with Him. It is the difference between clearly stated truths and applications of those truths.

The issue for these critics was not that Jesus was breaking God's law, but that He was breaking their application of God's law. What were Jesus and the disciples doing that drew such criticism? Jesus's followers ate and drank (vv.33b). Yep, that was the problem.

The very religious (humanly speaking) Pharisees and disciples of John were highly offended by the practice of Jesus and His disciples. They didn't measure up to the "acceptable standard." How could they possibly think they were pleasing God? If Jesus was a bonafide Rabbi, why didn't He correct His followers to follow religious tradition?

That is just the point. Following Jesus and following manmade religion are at opposite poles. I am regularly confronted by the reality that religious leaders, pastors, teachers, who are very gifted communicators, and, therefore, command a large following either ignore Scripture altogether or twist it and take it out of context to make it fit their predetermined point. For example, many religious speakers are obviously intent on gathering as large a following as possible. Therefore, they adjust their teaching and preaching to remove anything that might be offensive, deemed too costly, considered unpopular to acceptable living according to the world's standard.

A couple of years ago someone recommended that I listen to a sermon by a pastor of a very fast-growing, multi-campused ministry. He was preaching from 1 Peter 1:6-21 about the trial of the Christian's faith. He emphasized the need for rejoicing in trials (v.6), how their faith would come out like precious gold (v.7), how Christians love Jesus and rejoice in Him (vv.8-11) and how they are redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus (vv.18-20). But what was very obvious to me was how the preacher conveniently skipped over verses 13-17 which read:

13 Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." 17 And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, 18 knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your

forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold" (1 Peter 1:13-18).

That kind of truth is not convenient for religious people who want to be acceptable to their world. Therefore, false teachers skip it. A large ministry is seldom built by telling people they need to be pure, which is to be distinct from their world. When the truth of God's Word is not acceptable to a sinful world, I guess we just replace it with our own ideas?

Then why did it appear that the disciples were acting more like their non-religious world than like the religious people? Jesus and the disciples were not doing one thing that God's law forbid. They were guilty of not engaging in a practice prescribed by religious hypocrites who did break God's law regularly.

Jesus explained the difference (vv.34-35). He explained that His followers should not be fasting yet because the Bridegroom was present. *And Jesus said to them, "Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?" (v.34).* The analogy came from current practice in relation to the Bridegroom and wedding procedures. Jesus pictured Himself as the Bridegroom. This was something new because Jesus is not called the bridegroom in the Old Testament. John the Baptist introduced the idea of Jesus being the Bridegroom when he pictured himself as the friend of Jesus the Bridegroom. In that context, John was teaching that he must decrease while Jesus increased (John 3:29).

In the New Testament, the Church is pictured as the Bride of the Bridegroom (Revelation 19:7; 21:2, 9; 22:17). That also might be the picture of the virgins waiting for the Bridegroom to come for the Bride (Matthew 25). If Jesus was the Bridegroom and the followers are the Bridegroom's friends, they were doing exactly what they should be doing. In Jesus's culture, the wedding was a time of great celebration. The celebration could last up to a week accompanied by feasting, drinking, dancing and much rejoicing. It was ludicrous to expect the wedding guests to fast at a time like that.

The Bridegroom's friends fast while He is gone. *"The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days" (v.35).* This is first mention in Luke of Jesus being taken away. No doubt everyone including the disciples missed the significance of the statement. But the time would come when

Jesus would be *taken way* by the authorities and crucified. That was a time of deep sadness for His followers. It is likely that the disciples, the friends of the Bridegroom, fasted during that time of sadness.

Jesus would also be *taken away* when He returned to heaven. Jesus warned the disciples that they would miss Him. He encouraged His followers to trust. In the context of Jesus talking about the fact that in a short time He was going to be taken away to heaven, Jesus said, *“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also”* (John 14:1-3).

How often do we read that promise and apply it to ourselves? That is the right application. And if we really trust Him, what do we do while we wait? We pray! That is what Jesus told us to do. *“Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it”* (John 14:13-14). Do we also fast when we need the peace He promised? Jesus promised in that setting, *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid”* (John 14:27). We, the friends of the Bridegroom, fast at times while we wait for His return. We are doing exactly what Jesus promised, not what religious leaders demanded.

Jesus’s Uniqueness Illustrated (vv.36-39).

In these verse we find three parables that are related to the wedding feast. First, as we consider the story about a worn out garment, we remember that the guests at a wedding were expected to wear the proper garments. In another story Jesus said, *“But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless”* (Matthew 22:11-12). Sometimes the host would provide the garments.

Also, at the wedding feast the guests would celebrate, enjoying the wine provided by the bridegroom’s family. To that end Jesus helped the host avoid embarrassment at the wedding in Cana.

Following are three parables that teach lessons showing why Jesus and His disciples were different or unacceptable to the “approved” religion.

Jesus is not a patch (v.36). The principle of the story is that old cloth cannot be combined with new cloth. *He also told them a parable: “No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment if he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old”* (v.36b). This was a foolish idea that no one with common sense would try. To tear a piece of cloth from a new garment would ruin the new garment. If you did sew the new cloth to the old garment, the colors of the old garment and new garment would not match. Furthermore, Matthew and Mark pointed out that the patch from the new garment would be unshrunk, so that when the patched garment was washed, the patch would shrink and ruin the old garment again (Matthew 9:16; Mark 2:21).

What did that have to do with the religious leaders’ criticism of Jesus? By application, Jesus taught that religious people could not add Him and the gospel to manmade traditions. The critics were trying to cut Jesus from the gospel and patch Him into their man-made system. They were not content to accept the “new garment” of the gospel in whole and throw out the tattered garment of oral traditions. This was the error of the Judaizers with whom Paul and Peter had so much trouble. Those Jews claimed that they believed that Jesus was the Messiah and Savior from sin. They claimed to have faith in Jesus. But their faith was not in Jesus alone. They claimed that it was necessary to have faith in Jesus AND continue to hold to the old laws of the Rabbis.

This is the same kind of error that is perpetrated by religious people today. They might have been reared in a system that taught them they could be saved from sin by keeping particular rules. These rules might be something like the five pillars of Islam or the seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church. Some of the traditions of Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians or any number of Protestant sects are no different. Keeping all those manmade traditions or perversions of Scripture cannot save anyone from their sins. You cannot add any such works to Jesus’s gospel and be born again. The Good News of the Gospel is that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ alone, plus nothing. Paul explained it like this to Titus: *But when the goodness*

and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior (Titus 3:4-6).

Second, Jesus used an illustration to explain that He is not the old wineskin (vv.37-38). *And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins (vv.37-38).*

The principle is founded on the reality that new wine bursts old skins. Everyone in that day understood that adding the new to the old skins would destroy the wine and the skin. The ancients made containers for wine from the skins of animals like sheep or goats. The new leather would be flexible, which allowed for expansion as the new wine fermented. If a person put new wine in an old, brittle skin, as the gas from fermentation expanded, it would burst the skin and both the skin and wine would be wasted.

By application Jesus taught that He is not the old vessel. It is important to understand that the “old skin” in this parable was not the Law. The Law that God gave to Moses was good and necessary. It is still necessary to show us our offense against God and our need for forgiveness. Jesus did not destroy the law or change the law. He brought to completion all the promises and pictures the law gave to foretell salvation.

The old skin was the multitude of rules the religious leaders created as application of the true law of God. Those were rules like “how to keep the Sabbath holy” which rules God never intended. Those religious leaders created rules like “how to honor father and mother” which were actually in conflict with the law. The religious leaders tried to force Jesus and the gospel into those skins. The gospel cannot be found in the old skins of human works. We are changed from sinners into saints by the miracle of God in order to do good works. No sinner was ever changed to a saint BY good works.

Third, Jesus taught that He is not the old wine (v.39). *“And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says, ‘The old is good’” (v.39).* The principle is that the old wine deadens the taste for better wine. The old wine might be a reference to the same old wine

someone has been drinking for years and they are not interested in trying something new. It could be compared to a person my age who likes Classic Coke. Don’t even try to give him the new Zero Coke or Vanilla Coke or any of the other hundreds of flavors one can find at that Coke factory in Atlanta.

Or, and more likely, the principle is that older wine is totally fermented and not diluted as much as it could be. Once the person drinks that stuff, their senses and tastes are altered so that they have no desire to try fresh wine, which being unfermented yet is more like our grape juice.

Jesus applied the principle to teach that people who are satisfied with old traditions will not taste of Christ. Satan loves to blind the eyes of unbelieving sinners with the old wine of dead religion. Paul described the problem: *In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4).* Religious, but sinful, people have drunk this wine for so long, they have no taste for the fresh wine of Jesus. The old wine of traditions tends to blind people from the glorious light of the gospel. So that when a religious person who truly needs to be born again hears the good news of the gospel, he responds by saying, “Oh I already know all about that.” They conclude “I’m in!” when they really are not.

In conclusion, we must remember that Jesus was never, ever characterized by breaking God’s law. He never put His followers in a situation that would make them guilty before God. But they were regularly guilty of breaking the laws and rules of the religious community. That still happens because Jesus does not fit into the mold of human traditions. It is good for us to challenge religious folks who are content with their social gospel, their cultural gospel, their “Church Authorized” gospel. Are you assuaging your spiritual thirst with a personal relationship with Jesus, or are you trying to assuage your thirst and hunger by trying to keep old traditions that cannot satisfy, cannot grant forgiveness?