

A man went to a funeral; his uncle had been sick for a long time before finally passing away.

He had an arrangement of flowers with a big sign that read;

“Though this was inevitable, I’m still sorry it happened to you”.

He got to the church early and placed his flower arrangement front and center.

As the ceremony begun, he was shocked...not only was he in the wrong church!

This wasn’t a funeral, but a wedding!

TITLE: A Funeral Face at a Wedding Feast

This is now the third controversy in the book that follows the pattern: scandal, challenge, answer

Mark 2:18 Now John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. People came and asked him, “Why do John’s disciples and the Pharisees’ disciples **fast**, but your disciples **do not fast**?”

Fasting: to abstain from food for a set period of time

- One fast was required by the Jews- the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)- 24 hour fast
- After the exile there were 4 additional national fasts, all of them marked disasters in Jewish history
- Devout Jews would also fast on Mondays and Thursdays, dawn to dusk

2 reasons for fasting in Jesus’ day:

Mourning - over sin; over the loss of someone; over a national tragedy; over calamity

Yearning - for salvation from invading nations; for rain; for blessing; for the Messiah

Jesus was not against fasting, He fasted Himself.

Disciples of Jesus today don’t *HAVE* to fast, but we do *GET* to.

We fast to deepen our communion with Christ, not to earn union with Him.

We want less of us

- We fast from anything that gets in the way of our relationship with Him
Maybe something has become a master over us
- We recognize we’ve drifted towards self-centeredness
it affects our relationships and clouds our judgment

We want more of God

- Not to impress God, or to negotiate with God, but to experience Him larger
We want to magnify His presence and experience His power to meet our every need
(physical, mental, spiritual and relational)
- In making a decision, we fast to seek more of His wisdom and guidance

The question some ‘people’ asked Jesus was not a bad one. I believe they were genuinely intrigued.

“Why are their disciples fasting (mourning and yearning) but your disciples are feasting (celebrating)?”

Mark 2:19 Jesus said to them, “The wedding guests cannot fast while the groom is with them, can they? As long as they have the groom with them, they cannot fast.

Weddings were (and still are) special occasions of celebration

- In Jesus’ day, it was a 7-day long party
- The guests would celebrate along with the bride and groom with food, wine, singing and dancing
- The thought of the guests of the groom *fasting* during the feast was out of the question!

But why would Jesus answer their question in this way?

The bible describes the relationship between God and His people with the picture of a groom and a bride

It’s all over the Old Testament-

Song of Songs; Hosea

Isaiah 54:5 Indeed, **your husband is your Maker**— his name is the Lord of Armies— and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of the whole earth.

It’s all over the New Testament-

Ephesians 5:31-32 For this reason a **man** will leave his father and mother and be joined to his **wife**, and the two will become one flesh. This mystery is profound, but I am talking about **Christ** and the **church**.

Revelation 19:7 Let us be glad, rejoice, and give him glory, because the marriage of the **Lamb** has come, and his **bride** has prepared herself.

Jesus is saying: **the long-awaited Savior, is here, and the wedding celebration has begun!**

Mark 1:15 “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

The Lord’s promise was unfolding before them-

Zechariah 8:19 he Lord of Armies says this: “The fast of the fourth month, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth **will become times of joy, gladness, and cheerful festivals** for the house of Judah. Therefore, love truth and peace.

Now that Jesus has come, He’s essentially saying, it’s the time for feasting, not fasting

FUN FACT: Jesus’ ministry is associated more times with *feasting* than with *fasting*

Again, not that Jesus was against fasting. In fact, He says, there will be a time for that-

Mark 2:20 But the time will come when the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day.

He’s speaking of the cross, yet even then, the resurrection was imminent

Here’s what I believe this means for us-

Following Jesus involves mortification, but not without consequent vivification

We die to ourselves, buried in the likeness of his death, raised to walk in newness of life

IOW- your Christian walk shouldn't be all gloom and self-degradation. We set our eyes on Heaven, on Christ

Followers of Jesus should be distinguished by joy, even amidst suffering, because the groom has come!

Philippians 4:4-7 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Jesus really wants His followers to get this, and so He gives a caution in the form of two parables

Mark 2:21-22 No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new patch pulls away from the old cloth, and a worse tear is made. ²²And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost as well as the skins. No, new wine is put into fresh wineskins."

We cannot set off to follow Jesus and try to combine His new way, His gospel of good news, with our old ways

- It's like a patch that instead of fixing a hole, tears the fabric worse
 - The Gospel of Jesus is not an add on to your life, *it is your new life*
- It's like filling an old wineskin (usually a goats hide sown and sealed tight) that doesn't have any more give or stretch, with new wine that will expand due to fermentation, and consequently ruin both the wineskin and the wine
 - The Gospel of grace, which stands on Christ's work and merit not our own, cannot be lived out while also trying to earn our acceptance with God based on our performance
 - The Gospel of grace which proclaims that God will provide for His children, cannot be lived out while also seeking to gain financial or emotional or relational peace on our own means
 - The Gospel of grace which promises that the Spirit will guide us, cannot be lived out while also ignoring what God's leading would be on any given situation

The old way is man focused; the new way is Jesus focused. They do not go together.

One is performance based; the other is founded on the gift grace

One is guilt driven; the other is free from any condemnation

One creates an uncertain standing; the other assures us we are in good standing

This isn't only true for those considering starting their journey with Jesus.

This is as much true for those who are already believers and followers of Him.

Galatians 3:3 Are you so foolish? After beginning by the Spirit, are you now finishing by the flesh?

Our old ways, our own ways, do not mix with the way of Jesus.

2 ways we might bring in our ways into our new walk with Christ-

Legalism- Setting standards so high they are unreachable and unnecessary

The letter to the Galatians addresses this

Liberalism- Setting standards so low they are meaningless or nonexistent

The letter of 1 Corinthians addresses this

Timothy Keller had a helpful chart noting the differences-

Legalism	Gospel	Liberalism
God is holy	God is holy and love	God is love
Earn your own righteousness	Receive God's perfect righteousness	You don't need perfect righteousness
Matter is bad and we are fallen—be suspicious of or reject physical pleasure (asceticism)	Matter is good yet we are fallen—physical enjoyment is good, but live wisely	Matter is good and we aren't fallen—satisfy your physical appetites
Sin only affects individuals—just do evangelism	Sin affects both individuals and social systems—do both evangelism and social action	Naive about depth of human sin—just do social action
People can't change / change is easy	People can change, but there are no quick fixes	People don't need to change
Go into guilt—work it off	Go through guilt—rest in Christ	Go away from guilt—convince yourself you're OK
Repent of sins	Repent of sins and self-righteousness	Repent of neither

Whether we drift toward legalism or liberalism, the issue is the same:
a man-centered lifestyle rather than a Jesus-Centered one

Main Point: **Chasing our own way leaves us drained and leads to ruin.**
Following Jesus yields delight and ends in abundant life.

What is the practical application of Jesus words?

- You can have **joy** now on the inside, despite what is going on outside, because Jesus has come, and the wedding feast has begun
 - Not a false or superficial joy; but true joy that often lives alongside the real pain, but not beneath it
- You can **obey** out of delight instead of dread, since Jesus has already accredited to you His own obedience and has made Himself responsible for the cost of your sin
 - the result of gratitude for what He's already done
- You can live **free** of the burden of guilt, because Jesus has carried it off you
 - Free of fear; *"I messed up, I need to hide from God"* vs *"I messed up, I need to run to God"*
- You can live **cleansed** from debilitating shame because Jesus has washed you in His cleansing blood
 - Your past does not define you any longer; your past abuse doesn't degrade you
- You can find **assurance** that the grace that brought you into the fold of God, will keep you in
 - He'll never give up on you, even when you've given up on yourself
- You can **trust** that all of the cares of your life, God cares for also, because He cares for you
 - The problem that is eating away at your sanity is where He wants you to see Him at work
- You can exercise **hope** in the trial, in the trouble, in the temptation, because Jesus isn't finished interceding and working on your behalf
 - When we can't see any signs of His caring hand, we can press on because we know His character & heart

Friends, the wedding feast has begun—and you're invited.

So here's the question: are you still clinging to old wineskins? Still patching holes with your own efforts?
 Still chasing your own way?

Today, Jesus offers you something better. Himself.

*****CALL UP WORSHIP TEAM

If you've been stuck in shame or performance, surrender it.

If you've lost your joy, let Him restore it.

If you've been walking your own path—even as a believer—today is the day to return to His way.

Let's leave the old behind.

Let's trust Him with our burdens, our past, and our future.

And let's live like the groom is here—because He is.

CALL TO ACTION:

1. Identify Your "Old Wineskin"

'What habit, mindset, or rhythm in my life doesn't stretch with the joy and grace of Jesus?'

Maybe it's perfectionism. Maybe shame. Maybe trying to control what God has already promised to care for.

2. Identify What's Stealing Your Joy

Bring it to Jesus in prayer. Trade it for the joy that *knows the Groom has come and is coming again*.

3. Fast With the Right Focus

This week, consider fasting—from food, from noise, from distraction—not to earn something, but to feast spiritually on Jesus. Let your hunger remind you: *He's the Bread of Life. He's the Bridegroom*.

4. Celebrate Small

Find one way each day to *celebrate His presence*—a moment of worship, serving someone, or gratitude. Let your life reflect a feast, not a funeral.

COMMUNION

BULPEN-

Fasting-

- One fast was required by the Jews- the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)- 24 hour fast
- There were 3 other types of voluntary fasts (usually dawn to dusk)
 - National Tragedies (i.e. destruction of the temple)
 - Crises (i.e. war, famine, plague, drought)
 - Personal reasons (in Jesus' day these were expected of Jews as signs of humiliation, penitence and general prayer aid)
 - Pharisees normally fasted on Mondays and Thursdays

John's disciples:

John had two purposes. One was to cause people to repent of their sin, and the other was to prepare them for the coming of Christ. John's ministry was one of sober reflection, including fasting as an outward sign of humility and regret for sinning.

But Jesus disciples with money too fast to prepare for the Messiah's coming, because he was already with them.

Pharisee's disciples

They fasted twice a week to show how holy they were. So doing they missed the whole point of fasting.

Wedding Guests-

- Usually 7 day feast for a virgin bride and 3 day long feast for remarried brides
- The objective was for the guests to celebrate with the bride and groom with food, wine, singing and dancing
- The thought of guests of the groom fasting during the feast was out of the question

Wineskins-

- The hide of a goat (or other animal) was sewn shut to store and preserve wine
- New hides could expand and were apt for new wine, which expanded due to fermentation
- Old hides were brittle and would burst if new wine was fermented in them

Like old rigid wineskins, our hearts could become hardened, and preventing the message of the gospel from fermenting in our souls

"The ministry of Jesus makes it clear that one does not need to perform acts of self-mortification to gain favor with God or to manipulate God to do one's bidding."

Jesus rejects religious behavior that is turned into a show to gain the approval or admiration of others.

The disciples of Jesus are not to be characterized by their sorrow or mourning (though there is a time for such) but by their joy.

Fasting is only meaningful when it comes from a concern so deep that food does not matter- like mourning a loved one or purging our souls of our self-centered gratification

Matthew 6:16-18 "Whenever you fast, don't be gloomy like the hypocrites. For they disfigure their faces so that their fasting is obvious to people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head

and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that your fasting isn't obvious to others but to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

The point of the 2 parables is that you cannot mix the new and fresh with the old and stale

The man-made traditions they added to God's Law left no room for Jesus. To try to infuse Jesus to their traditions was not going to work. Jesus fresh teaching and message is that the King and His Kingdom have now come

The people are the ones who raise the question, but they are asking the wrong question.

Instead of asking how Jesus relates to fasting they should have asked, how does fasting relate to Jesus?

Sewing new patches on old garments and new wine poured into old wineskins was one of the errors of the early church. In the church at Galatia for example they wanted to sow together Judaism and Christianity, circumcision and baptism.

People are still prone to this error.

We want to mix the gospel with new age, or astrology, or some political agenda (Christian nationalism) or some liberal agenda (Christian Marxism).

In a closer context, we want to mix the truth of the gospel, with our desires or leanings.

You cannot blend Jesus in and try to have him justify your sin or choices or lifestyle.

On a day when the disciples of other teachers were fasting, Jesus' disciples were feasting

Illustration of not able to keep the whole law- draw a one-inch straight line. Now keep drawing it for 20 feet

We are crooked

2 Corinthians 11:2 For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy, because I have promised you in marriage to one husband—to present a pure virgin to Christ.

“What God demanded of you in His law, He has provided for you in His gospel” – Jimmy Buehler