

PARABLES | New Wine in Old Wineskins

Jimmy Harris

February 5, 2023

Introduction

Today's prayer: *Jesus teach us today about the availability of the kingdom and show us what life in the kingdom looks like today. Amen.*

The kingdom is available to those who are desperate

A clash of cultures...

Matthew 9:1-8 (Summarized)

Jesus forgives the sins of the paralytic dropped down from the roof. Then He forgives the paralytic — the Pharisees are indignant.

Matthew 9:9-13

⁹ As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. ¹⁰ And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹² But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Is it strange for you to imagine Jesus at a party?

Jesus as a fun and interesting person?

Would you want to invite him to your party.

Why?

Jesus is not grumpy and solemn all the time. In Him is joy and laughter, and peace. Jesus was at the party — but also, the sinners wanted Him there!

***The kingdom is not stuffy and serious all the time.
It's like an invitation to a party not a funeral.***

Sometimes I cannot believe the angry, grouchy, Christians I run into. Sometimes that grumpy Christian is me! That is not Jesus. Followers of Christ ought to be the happiest people on earth. Which is an important challenge for all of us.

What does Jesus mean when he says, "Go learn what this means, I desire mercy not sacrifice"?

- **Story:** Sometimes when I am counseling someone else, I learn something ugly about myself. **"Tell me what you want me to do, and I will do it."** (*Jesus wants a genuine heart, not your lame apology or disingenuous effort.*)

Jesus came for the sick!

Jesus came for the sick! He is building a team of misfits!

- We are all injured.
- None of us is unscathed by sin.
- Some of us are injured but we can still help.
- Desperate times calls for desperate measures.
- Turns out living in the kingdom is messy business.
- It is not happening in a comfy little bubble.
- It's lives outside of the building.
- It is not safe.
- It is not for the faint of heart.
- It is not for experts — it's for the willing.
- It does not call the qualified, it qualifies the called.

**You don't have to figure it all out, do it perfectly,
or be an expert to live in the kingdom of God.**

So, if God's kingdom is really that wild and free — *does that mean we need to throw out the law?* No, what Jesus is talking about here is not the law itself, but the abuses of the law and the misapplication of it to put burdens on people.

Legalism is not the same thing as “the law.”

Man-made rules or applications lead to legalism. Legalism is oppressive and dead, while also taking something good (God's word) and using it to have status or power. It is manipulating the truth into something that serves you instead of glorifying God.

In Romans and Galatians, Paul says that the law is a tutor, the law is a guide, the law is a light to our feet, it is our guardian.

*The law is not the source of rightness it is however the course of rightness.¹
~ Dallas Willard*

The law was the first meaningful constitution for the whole world! Want civilization? Start with the 10 Commandments. True freedom cannot exist without the Law. It is the “Magna Carta of Christian liberty!”

Often the “Laws” that Jesus seemed to be contradicting or clarifying, or intentionally “breaking” were never intended to be applied the way they were. *The Law is designed to guide the people of God to him.*

The problem isn't the law, it's the way it is used.

You see the law shows us that we need to be desperate for God's power — not our own.

Mark 7:6-8

⁶ And he (Jesus) said to them (Pharisees), “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; ⁷ in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ ⁸ You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.”

¹ Dallas Willard. Renovation of the Heart (Tyndale House, Feb 27, 2014)

The law is not legalism

If you have lived in a culture of legalism, you know exactly what Jesus is talking about here.

The Law is not legalism. In fact, *legalism is the oppressive misapplication of God's word that puts burdens on people – while Jesus has come to set us free!*

Matthew 23:1-5

“Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, ² “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, ³ so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. ⁴ They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. ⁵ They do all their deeds to be seen by others.

I met a pastor named Larry Osborn at a conference.

Here are four quick insights I learned from him:

1. Give people spiritual tools, not rules.
2. **KISS. Keep It Simple Stupid.** If it is too complicated for the average person to understand, it is not helpful. It is a form of intellectual legalism. God's truth should be accessible to everyone.
3. Don't put heavy yokes on people. If it's a burden, it is not the yoke that Jesus described (*his burden is light*).
4. Use the word of God like a **mirror** not as a **microscope** or a set of **binoculars**.

Jesus uses three images to answer John's disciples

Now that we understand the context let's look a little more at the parable. Meanwhile...Jesus is still at the party...

Matthew 9:14-17

¹⁴ Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” ¹⁵ And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. ¹⁶ No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. ¹⁷ Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.”

Jesus uses three images to answer John's disciples.

- Bridegroom
- Patch
- Wineskins

What does Jesus mean that he is the Bridegroom?

In John Chapter 3 we learn that John the Baptist and his disciples have already heard this analogy related to Jesus.

John himself had described himself the “best man” of the bridegroom.

John 3:29

²⁵ Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. ²⁶ And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness (Jesus)—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him." ²⁷ John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' ²⁹ The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore, this joy of mine is now complete. ³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease.

What does a "best man" do?

They don't draw attention to themselves and away from the bride!
They feel joy.
They feel honored.
They are happy for the bridegroom and are supportive of the marriage.
That was John's example.

Now Jesus is saying that he is the bridegroom.

Earlier, Jesus had just come from a party where he made the good wine. *Now he is at a party with sinners and tax collectors!*

All of this is part of a much larger story. **Jesus, the Messiah, was here for his bride.**

In the book of Hosea, God called the prophet to marry a prostitute. After becoming his wife, she kept leaving him and going back to prostitution. Again and again, she left. What was God saying through the prophet Hosea?

God used this picture to teach Israel about her infidelity and the pain of His heart and longing to be with her.

Jesus is fulfilling the scriptures, while revealing who He is and the heart of God for the bride. He is the long-awaited bridegroom come to write the law of Moses — not on stone tablets — but on hearts of flesh. He has come to give us His whole heart and to give us a new heart towards Him.

What does Jesus mean there is a time for fasting later?

It more like he is saying there is a time, and place, for fasting.

Jesus is alluding to the future, when, after he was raised from the dead, the disciples would go and wait for the Holy Spirit to come. That is when they would fast. As they waited for power to come from on high.

The patch and the wineskins

What is Jesus saying to John's disciples?

New wine is acidic and when it is placed in a stretched out "old" wineskin, the pressure as it fermented would essentially pop the old leather.

To put it simply. These things do not go together.

You can't marry hypocritical legalism and the good news of the kingdom.

You cannot patch gospel onto your legalism and expect it to hold up. It won't hold together.
You need a whole new garment.

You cannot receive the gospel of grace and remain the way that you are!
You need a whole new wineskin.

- **To the desperate people this was good news because they were ready to leave everything and follow Jesus.**
- **But, to the legalist it was death, to the hypocrite it was undoing.**
- **Because you cannot follow Jesus and stay the way you are.**
- **You need to be reborn.**
- **You need to be “refilled” with the Spirit of God.**

Pray/review

- The kingdom is available to those who are desperate.
- It's for anyone here today that knows they need it.
- You don't have to figure it all out or do it “right” or be an “expert” to serve in God's kingdom.
- The kingdom is not stuffy and serious all the time. It's more like an invitation to a party, not a funeral.
- You can't put God in a box or patch him onto the old you. We need a whole new thing.
- The Law is not legalism — they cannot be mixed. In fact, legalism is the oppressive misapplication of God's word that puts burdens on people — while Jesus has come to set us free!

Jesus is calling the desperate, he is choosing regular, messed-up, broken people. He is showing us a whole new way to live. Teach us more, Lord. We long to be filled with your power and living each day in power.

Discussion Questions

1. What does Jesus mean when he says, “Go learn what this means, I desire mercy not sacrifice”?
2. Discuss: Legalism is not the same thing as “the law.”
3. What does Jesus mean, “He is the Bridegroom”?
4. What does Jesus mean, “There is time for fasting later”?
5. What is the meaning of the parables of the new garment, and of the new wineskin?

NOTES