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Sermon Notes

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## **The Lesson of Wineskins: The Gospel is New and Powerful**

**Mark 2:18-22**

Today we will contemplate the incredible power of the gospel...  
power to make all things NEW!

When the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost almost two thousand years ago, the small church in Jerusalem numbered only 120 souls... Moved by the invisible spiritual power of the Holy Spirit, they poured out into the streets of the city and began preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to all who were assembled there.

That same day, there were added 3000 new believers to the church. And since that day, the church has only grown and grown and grown. No power on earth has compared to it. The light of the gospel entered this dark world and nothing has been able to extinguish it

What is power but the ability to make a CHANGE?

Certainly nature is powerful... as Sebastian Junger put it in his book *A Perfect Storm*, "a mature hurricane is by far the most powerful event on earth," greatly surpassing the combined nuclear arsenals of the United States and the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War. But like the atomic bomb, a hurricane is only destructive power. It blows things apart... like sin itself.

The scientific revolution is powerful... moving with stunning rapidity from Orville and Wilbur Wright's first heavier than air

vehicle in 1903 to landing a man on the moon a mere 66 years later. The digital age has evolved like lightning... moving from the primitive personal computers of the mid-1980s to our smartphones and other amazing electronic devices today. The power to effect change.

But how can we accurately measure the power of the gospel and its effects on human history? This gospel spiritually conquered the Roman Empire in three short centuries... moving from the empty tomb outside Jerusalem to the throne of Caesar. At present, there are hundreds of millions of people all over this globe who worship Jesus as Lord and who seek to obey him every moment of their lives. And that is just the earthly manifestation of this gospel. The real power is that, when all is said and done, it will have plucked a numberless multitude from every tribe and language and people and nation from an eternity in hell and placed them in heavenly glory forever. And that's power!! What is greater than the change from an eternity in agony in the dark fires of hell to an eternity in joy in the glories of heaven? Multiplied by hundreds of millions of souls?!

In today's text, Jesus will speak of this powerful gospel and say it cannot be held by the dry husks of old man-made traditions and the dead hulls of unregenerate souls. Today we will see that the gospel is NEW and POWERFUL.

Amazingly... it all starts with a question about FASTING

### I. Fasting at a Wedding?

***Mark 2:18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?"***

#### A. Legalistic Religion Hunts Jesus Down

##### 1. Fundamental false religion of the world: self-righteousness

John Owen: “Mortification from self-strength, carried on by ways of self-invention, unto the end of self-righteousness, is the soul and substance of all false religion in the world.”

2. Matthew 6: Jesus exposed three patterns of conspicuous piety
  - a. Obvious generosity to the poor and needy... announcing giving with trumpets
  - b. Conspicuous, public, showy prayers... making it obvious to everyone how much and how fervently you pray
  - c. Conspicuous, public fasting...

***Matthew 6:16 “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting.”***

3. Fasting only required at one time in the Law of Moses... on the day of atonement... ONCE A YEAR... called in Leviticus 16:29 a day to “afflict your own souls”... a day of self-denial
4. From time to time, the nation would be called on to fast and pray as a display of national mourning over sin, as in Nehemiah 9:1 after the Jews were again intermarrying with pagan women
5. Occasionally individuals would fast and pray over specific matters, like David when he was confessing sin or Ezra what he wanted God’s help and protection in his journey back to Israel
6. BUT the Pharisees, the pictures of the legalistic religion of self-effort, went way beyond that into a regular pattern of fasting twice a week

***Luke 18:11-12 The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men-- robbers, evildoers, adulterers-- or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'***

7. They established these legalistic fasts into specific holy days in which they would bind the consciences of the Jews to follow their pattern or they would be seen to be substandard Jews
8. This was a time of mourning, of “disfiguring their faces” so that everyone knew they were fasting

9. The poison in all of this was in thinking that by this, they were earning favor with God... that they could pay for their sins by harsh treatment of the body
10. These fasts were symbols of self-styled religion, self-efforts at paying for sins and blackmailing God into accepting them

#### B. John's Disciples Wrapped Up in It

1. John's movement was massive... huge numbers of Jews came to deal seriously with their sins; perhaps tens of thousands
2. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by John in the waters of the Jordan River
3. But after being baptized by John, now what? How could they "bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance?"
4. Some of them joined the Pharisees and fell into their legalistic patterns of fasting and prayer and giving and spiritual arrogance
5. **INFINITELY WORSE:** They clearly didn't seem to know John's amazing testimony about Jesus Christ, that he was the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world, that he was the SON OF GOD!

#### C. Context: The Feast at Levi's House

1. Jesus isn't fasting at all! He and his disciples had just partaken in a big feast at Levi's house with a bunch of tax collectors and sinners
2. This was incredibly offensive to these legalistic religionists... they thought, "If this man were from God, he would fast as we do!!"
3. But instead of going directly at Jesus, they ask him about his disciples... the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, so are John's disciples... why aren't your disciples fasting?
4. Again, note, this is not the one day of the year in which the Law of Moses required a fast! This was a man-made religion, a man-made fast, a legalistic religion's requirement
5. Jesus was in no way concerned with their artificial demands, and in no way felt ashamed coming out of Levi's house after the feast in

which so many tax-collectors and sinners had been rescued by grace and become his disciples

#### D. Jesus Exposes Their Ignorance of Him and of the Times

***Mark 2:19 Jesus answered, 'How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them.***

1. They don't know who he is!! And they don't understand the significance of his coming to the earth
2. He is the BRIDEGROOM... and his disciples are like the GUESTS at a wedding!
3. This theme is amazing... picking up on the marriage imagery that God sometimes used in the Old Testament of God and his bride, Israel... and anticipating the later teaching in Ephesians 5 in which Paul likens the Church to the Bride of Christ... so also the Book of Revelation, in which the Bride of Christ, the New Jerusalem is dressed for her wedding day
4. A picture of an eternal love relationship between Christ and his people... the getting together of the two is like a wedding banquet
5. John the Baptist himself had made this same analogy... when some of his disciples were upset that many people were following Jesus

***John 3:29-30 The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. <sup>30</sup> He must increase; I must decrease.***

6. Now let's be honest: WHO FASTS AT A WEDDING BANQUET?? If a man is getting married and invites his friends to come to the wedding banquet, if they fast and refuse to eat the delicacies he has sumptuously laid out, that would be bizarre bad manners
7. Jesus: This is a time of JOY because they get to be with me! To sit with me, see my face, hear my wisdom, drink in my love... just being with me is like a banquet for my beloved disciples

8. For centuries, the faithful people of God had been longing for the coming of the Messiah, the Chosen One of God... now that day has come! How much would Isaiah have longed to be there to see the days he prophesied? How much would David have longed to sit at table with the perfect fulfillment of his kingly reign?

***Matthew 13:16-17 blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. <sup>17</sup> For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.***

9. The blessedness of this time made it a time of JOY

10. That the Pharisees and John's disciples are coming with their empty grumbling stomachs and their joyless legalism and condemning the friends of the bridegroom for feasting on his wisdom and drinking deeply in his perfect goodness shows how MESSED UP they were

E. Jesus Brings Joy... Not Sorrow; the Joy of Sitting at Table with God Himself; Legalism Kills Joy

1. A modern expression is a BUZZKILL... or killjoy, wet blanket
2. These legalists were all BUZZKILLS; they should have been friends of the Bridegroom and sat at table with him and feasted along with everyone else
3. In Galatians, as Paul is addressing the bitter legalism that the Judaizers had brought, he asks a simple question to the Galatian converts he led to Christ:

***Galatians 4:15 What has happened to all your joy?***

4. Legalism makes people devour each other viciously

***Galatians 5:15 If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.***

F. YET... the Joy that Jesus Came to Bring is Not Yet Fully Come

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

1. Jesus is here alluding first and foremost to his arrest and crucifixion
2. On that day, there would be no feasting... only deep sorrow

***John 16:20 I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.***

3. Furthermore, even after Christ is raised from the dead and ascended to heaven, the heavenly feast has not yet fully come
4. So Christian people do need to fast from time to time... to grieve over sin, or to focus in prayer, as they do in Acts 13 before they sent Paul out on his first missionary journey with Barnabas
5. BUT when all is said and done, we will sit at table with Jesus in heaven, and enjoy his perfect glory and infinite love and measuredly beauty... we will drink deeply of him forever

## II. The Twin Parables: Unshrunk Cloth and New Wine

- A. These Two Parables Are Teaching the Same Lessons in Slightly Different Ways
- B. They Are Doubled for Emphasis... these lessons are VITAL
- C. Parable #1: The Unshrunk Cloth and the Old Garment

***Mark 2:21 "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse.***

1. The image is one of an old garment... an old shirt or cloak or robe or coat; it has been washed many times, and is perhaps faded
2. This old garment has to be repaired... it has a hole in it
3. It would be FOOLISH to use a brand-new piece of cloth to patch that garment? Jesus calls it "unshrunk"... its never been subjected to the washing process; whenever a piece of new cloth is washed for the first time, it shrinks, it pulls in
4. And if it is sown on an old garment, when that shrinkage occurs, the tear is now much worse

## D. Parable #2: The New Wine and the Old Wineskin

***Mark 2:22 And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins.***

1. In those days, wine was kept in containers made of animal skins
2. The animal's hide would be uncut except at the legs and neck; perhaps it was turned inside out after being treated and prepared
3. The openings, like at the neck, were used to pour the wine in, and a stopper was put in
4. As new wine would begin to ferment, it would put off gases... the wineskin would begin to expand, like a balloon
5. An old wineskin, exposed to the sun and the air over a long period of time would dry out and lose its elasticity; it would become stiff and inflexible
6. And if you pour new wine into an old wineskin, eventually the pressure build-up from the gases will cause a rupture... the old wineskin will burst and both the wine and the wineskin will be ruined... lost
7. So, people know to pour new wine into new wineskins, so that both are preserved

#### E. Additional Lesson from Luke

***Luke 5:39 And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, 'The old is better.'***

1. The people who are used to the old patterns will hate the new
2. They want to stick with what they've know, what they've become accustomed to
3. The new wine tastes weird to them

### III. Lesson #1: The Gospel is New

#### A. The New Piece of Cloth and the New Wine

1. These both represent the newness of the gospel, the newness of Christ and the work he has come to do in the world



2. Our TOP PRIORITY IN LIFE is to understand this gospel of Jesus Christ... to wear the new garment and to drink the new wine
3. For us to delight in the newness of Christ and of his new work in our lives and in the world

#### B. The Old Garment and the Old Wineskin

1. These represent the legalistic Pharisees and in this case John's disciples who are following their approach to religion
2. Legalism is inflexible... they have traditions they are following that were passed down from rabbis two hundred years before that
3. The legalists of Jesus' day were INFLEXIBLE... like the old garment that is set in its size, it cannot move, it is inflexible; so also the old wineskin... weathered, hard, brittle, unyielding
4. That's what legalism and traditionalism do
5. They cannot respond to the NEWNESS that Jesus came to bring to the world

#### C. Christianity is NEW... it is UNIQUE... it is unlike anything else on earth

1. The New Cloth and the New Wine represent the newness of Christ, the New Covenant, the new life he came to bring
2. It fresh, alive, living, active, beautiful, aromatic, fruitful

#### D. Focused on the New Person that Jesus Christ is... utterly unique in all the world

1. He stands alone; there is no other religious leader like him, no political leader either; unique in all history
2. He is the new cloth; he is the new wine; it centers on him
3. They could not understand who he was, what he came to do!
4. He is the Bridegroom, come to seek and save his Bride
5. He is the GOD-MAN, fully God, fully man; anyone who has seen him has seen the glory of God himself in human form

6. He stands alone, and with his advent into the world, history itself was changed... everything would be impacted
7. He was new... his life was new... his miracles were new... his teachings were unlike any words that anyone had ever heard before
8. Even his enemies said this:

***John 7:46 "No one ever spoke the way this man does,"***

9. When Jesus healed the man born blind, he testified plainly:

***John 9:32 Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind.***

10. This was something entirely new... and he has never been duplicated since then; no one else has come along to supplant him or supersede him
11. Jesus is the New Cloth, Jesus is the New Wine
12. Jesus is the consummation of human history... who else could say this:

***Revelation 22:13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.***

13. Who else could say this:

***John 14:9 Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.***

14. Or this:

***John 8:58 "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."***

- E. This New Person Brings a New Religion... a Whole New Way of Expressing Life and Love for God
  1. Christianity could never have fit into the old patterns
  2. The Old Religion of the Old Covenant was now obsolete
    - a. It was holy and righteous and good for its time

- b. But once Jesus came, once Jesus died on the cross, the Old Covenant was FULFILLED and OBSOLETE
- c. In some sense, the Old Covenant was the Old Garment and the Old Wineskin
- d. Jeremiah predicted the day when God would make a New Covenant

***Jeremiah 31:31 "The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.***

The essence of this new covenant is to work inside the souls of the people a holiness and a true forgiveness of sins the old covenant could never work... it wrote God's pure moral code in our hearts and minds from within, and it worked a genuine atonement for sins that the blood of animals could never have worked

- e. The author to the Hebrews saw what these words meant

***Hebrews 8:13 By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear***

- F. The religion Jesus came to work would be entirely new
  - 1. The animal sacrificial system would be gone
  - 2. The temple would be gone
  - 3. The Levitical priesthood would be gone
  - 4. The ceremonial laws of circumcision and food restrictions would be gone
  - 5. The Old Covenant's wineskins could never hold the New Covenant's truth in Christ
  - 6. So the moment Jesus died

***Mark 15:38 The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.***

7. That signified the END of the Old Covenant religious system forever
  8. That was a system God himself had set up... but now it was OLD and OBSOLETE and God himself would remove it by the Roman Army in AD 70 destroying the temple
- G. If the Holy and God-Ordained Old Covenant was Obsolete... How Much More the Man-Made Legalism of the Pharisees???
1. The system of conspicuous piety, of fasting twice a week and making it obvious to everyone how miserable your religion is making you??
  2. That is surely like a tattered old garment that could never coexist with the New Religion and the New Life Jesus came to bring
  3. That is absolutely like some old hard brittle wineskin that would rupture at the new wine of Jesus' gospel
- H. See How NEW this Wine IS

1. Jesus cannot pour his new wine into an old wineskin... neither concerning the religion of the nation or indeed the heart of the individual!!
2. Jesus has to make the person new from within by the Spirit
3. He starts by transforming us completely

***2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, BEHOLD... new things have come!***

4. That is what the NEW BIRTH means

***John 3:3 Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."***

***John 3:7-8 You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' <sup>8</sup> The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."***

I. When the Gospel Comes into a person's life... everything becomes NEW

1. They have a new mind... the mind of Christ
2. They have a new way of thinking about everything of significance... God, life, death, our bodies, the Bible, other Christians, time, money, work, friendships... there is not a significant topic in all of life that is not radically transformed and made NEW by Christ

J. And in the End:

***Revelation 21:5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"***

***Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away***

IV. Lesson #2: The Gospel is Powerful

A. The Image of Both the New Cloth and the New Wine is POWER

1. There is great force in both
2. The new cloth pulls hard at the old garment... it MUST change, it MUST shrink... nothing can stop it
3. So also the new wine is energetic, surging, powerful... it must expand, and it will explode anything that does not yield to its surging power

B. Do You Not See the ENERGY? The POWER of this Gospel of Christ?

1. Christ and his Gospel Message are POWERFUL

***Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes***

***Acts 1:8 you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.***

2. They could not leave the world the same!!

3. The gospel comes into your life with amazing POWER and raises you from the dead spiritually
4. The same power that raised Christ from the dead raised you up as well spiritually
5. And these changed lives result in a powerfully surging changing world...
6. It was said of Paul and Silas by their enemies in Thessalonica:

***Acts 17:6 "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also!"***

#### C. Jesus Displayed Power Everywhere He Went

1. He never left anything the same
2. He had absolute power over demons... they fled from him in terror
3. He had absolute power over disease... there was nothing he could not cure
4. He had absolute power over death... he effortlessly raised dead people with a word
5. He had absolute power over sin... he could declare a man completely forgiven simply based on his faith
6. This is the surging power of Christ in the gospel... the Kingdom advanced powerfully and nothing could stop it

#### D. This Powerful Gospel Was Utterly Destructive of Every Obstacle

***2 Corinthians 10:4-5 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. <sup>5</sup> We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.***

1. Christianity demolished human philosophies... it exposed them as foolish
2. Christianity demolished all legalistic efforts at self-righteousness

Paul considered his legalistic self-righteousness RUBBISH compared to the glory of Christ

3. Christianity destroys all false religions... it exposes all of them as demonic frauds
4. Christianity levels our false foundations... it blows them all up
5. It exposes the worthlessness of worldly wealth and power and success... none of it survives an encounter with Christ
6. It basically smashes US with conviction

*Acts 2:37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"*

It bursts all our old wineskins... it makes us spiritual beggars who know that we have no answer

THEN... it builds us up again in Christ; makes us new people, filled with life and joy and power

New thoughts, new desires, new power, new purpose

E. Have You Felt the POWER of the Gospel Surging Through Your Life?