

# **Sermon: New and Old: A Comparison of Covenants**

**Text: Luke 5:33-39**

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We are picking up in Luke where we left off two weeks ago. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law continue to interrogate Jesus for their own reasons.

**Luke 5:33-39 (NIV)** <sup>33</sup>They said to him, “John’s disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking.” <sup>34</sup>Jesus answered, “Can you make the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? <sup>35</sup>But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast.” <sup>36</sup>He told them this parable: “No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. <sup>37</sup>And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. <sup>38</sup>No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. <sup>39</sup>And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, ‘The old is better.’”

**Introduction:** When you are presented with “new” information, how do you respond? Do you reject it out-of-hand? Do you investigate it if it conflicts with what you have always been taught? The question one always ought to ask about information is not whether it is old or new, established or novel, but “is it true?” Just because something is true does not guarantee its’ acceptance. It most certainly depends on the character of the speaker and the hearer. Not everyone wants to hear the truth or even good news for that matter. Not everyone going to a doctor wants to hear the truth. That may be the reason for seeking second and third opinions. The good news is you can live another ten years, but you have to move 1500 miles away from your family to a drier climate and higher altitude. Would you do it?

Imagine you had just discovered a fuel system that does away with our need for fossil fuels entirely. Great news, right? Well, stockholders in Exxon may not be thrilled, and countries whose main revenue source is from oil might be less than enthusiastic. I would think there might even be an attempt to discredit you.

You might have heard of Galileo. Four hundred years ago, using his new invention, the telescope, Galileo discovered that the earth was not the center of the universe (geocentric), but revolved around the sun (heliocentric). He shared this “new” and exciting discovery with Pope Paul V. The Church was resistant to change and certainly did not want to admit it was wrong. As a result, Galileo was forced to recant these so-called heresies and was punished severely by those who wanted to suppress what later became accepted truth. Jesus encountered a similar difficulty in presenting a “new” view of God. Both died because they presented the truth.

Looking at the old and new covenants we recognize:

## **I. A Comparison Relating to Mood (vv. 33-35).**

**Luke 5:33 (NIV)** <sup>33</sup>They said to him, “John’s disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking.”

### **A. Fasting**

God had only required of the Jews one fast day (**Leviticus 16:29**), and that was the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*). Beyond that command, man had taken the annual practice and turned it into a badge of piety. Even John the Baptist’s disciples practiced fasting in an attempt to show devotion to God.

The Pharisees in Jesus’ time were fasting on Mondays and Thursdays on a regular basis. Some made a habit of making sure everybody knew they were fasting. Jesus was not opposed to fasting for religious purposes only the improper motivation.

**Matthew 6:16-18 (NIV)** <sup>16</sup>“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. <sup>17</sup>But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup>so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Jesus had the same approach regarding prayer and giving (alms). One’s heart was the important issue in worship. Here, Jesus was not opposed to the practice of fasting, but its appropriateness for the time. Jesus was declaring the Messiah was here and the mood needed to be changed. It was time to celebrate!

It was to be reflected in:

### **B. Eating and drinking**

**Luke 5:34-35 (NIV)** <sup>34</sup>Jesus answered, “Can you make the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? <sup>35</sup>But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast.”

Jesus was calling for a celebration similar to what was the custom during weddings of his day where the mood was light and joyful and might go on for a week or more. Even the most dedicated dieters will set aside the food scales and eat a sumptuous meal with friends and family. Even those who would not ordinarily imbibe in alcohol might raise a glass of champagne to join in a toast. Dieting clearly has no place at weddings.

As Christians we are looking forward to heaven which is really described as a Sabbath! Jesus was saying heaven has come down in your midst.

**“The day of rest was to be characterized by good eating, Jub. 2:21, 31; 50:9 f.; bShab., 119a etc. Whereas two meals were normally eaten on week-days, there were to be three on the Sabbath...Fasting on the Sabbath was not allowed lest the enjoyment of the feast be hampered,” - TDNT, Vol. VII, p. 16**

**Some of the best meals I have eaten have been connected with Sundays or church services.**

**There may be times ahead where it is appropriate to be even in mourning, but at a wedding is not one of them. Even the Bridegroom will weep later, but not now!**

**Looking at the old and new covenants we recognize:**

## **II. A Comparison Relating to Approach (vv. 36-38).**

**Luke 5:36-38 (NIV) <sup>36</sup>He told them this parable: “No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. <sup>37</sup>And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. <sup>38</sup>No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins.**

**A. Syncretism does not work. (mustard and lemon ice cream are the same color.)**

**A novice seamstress soon learns that fabric must be matched by more than color and type. Through observation in seeing others’ mistakes one notices that old fabric cannot be patched with new. The new piece will shrink and tear itself as well as the connected pieces.**

**Jesus uses a specific word throughout this section. The Greek word translated “new” (*kainos*) does not mean new in time, but new in kind. In other words we are not even talking about the same kind of thing.**

**Throughout history, people have picked and chosen what they wanted from a religious smorgasbord coming up with all kinds of distorted approaches to God. Jesus came to tell us that no matter what you have practiced, there is only one way to the Father. The picture is the Bridegroom has come and the Bride is the Church. The Church are those who place their faith in Jesus and love Him - and Him only!**

**Another part of this parable talks about the utter foolishness of putting new wine in old wineskins. Just like taking a patch from a new garment ruins the new garment, and the old garment is made even worse by the new patch causing and even larger hole, with this illustration both the wine and the wineskin would be destroyed.**

Some items just do not go together. Maybe to give it a modern application. It would be like building a new computer with all the best hardware, software and peripherals and using a 20 year-old Operating System (OS). It won't work.

Jesus is saying:

**B. A choice is required.**

It is a choice between the old and the new. It is a decision for death rather than life. The correct choice is always to follow God and what He is doing. The people of God have always been moving and changing. Sometimes because of rebellion, but many times, also, because of God's leading. It always required faith.

Abraham left home to follow God's plan. The Hebrew people left Egypt behind to follow God into the wilderness and become a covenant-people for God. Under the new covenant 12 men decided to leave everything and follow a carpenter of questionable lineage whom they would later recognize as God.

The clothing metaphor is continued in Paul's writings: [Galatians 3:26-29 \(NIV\)](#) <sup>26</sup>You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, <sup>27</sup>for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup>There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup>If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. The choice of faith, baptism, and putting Christ on like a garment is still yours today. It no longer comes through obedience to the Law and the right bloodline.

Hopefully not to get too far from the text it seems that Jesus continues in the [Isaiah 61](#) text that he took up in his first synagogue teaching.

[Isaiah 61:10 \(NIV\)](#) <sup>10</sup>I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

The right choice continues to be in the "new" covenant and whether we will be properly dressed for the wedding banquet (Messianic banquet) or not. It is important how one dresses and the choice one also must make for righteousness.

[Matthew 22:11-14 \(NIV\)](#) <sup>11</sup>"But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. <sup>12</sup>"Friend," he asked, "how did you get in here without wedding clothes?" The man was speechless. <sup>13</sup>"Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' <sup>14</sup>"For many are invited, but few are chosen." **You have been invited, it's your choice!**

Looking at the old and new covenants we recognize:

### III. A Comparison Relating to Dependability (vv. 39).

Luke adds this final verse in our text to the tradition of Mark and Matthew's accounts. **Luke 5:39 (NIV)** <sup>39</sup>And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, 'The old is better.'"

It is: A. Predictable (Law)

The Ten Words or Ten Commandments as they are more commonly called developed into hundreds and hundreds of regulations. The command to keep the Sabbath holy developed into more and more rules. There were 39 prohibited types of work which later had six examples added under each category. "Thus harvesting would include reaping, making wine, plucking, cutting and taking out olives, and plucking figs." - TDNT, Vol. VII, p. 12.

With all the rules there was some comfort in knowing exactly what you could and could not do. Yet with that kind of a system, a person has to be on guard constantly about doing something offensive. And in the end, it all depends on man and his ability to perform perfectly. One can develop a great deal of worry about making a mistake, and that can paralyze a person.

It is easy, though, to get in a pattern and always do the same thing. When I go to Bert's Wooden Indian and I walk through the door not only do I know what I am having - so do any of the waitresses who have been there for a while. It is always the same: 6 chicken wings with ranch dressing, french fries, and celery. The celery is to trick my body into believing that all the fat is healthy for me after all. To drink I have a "Diet" Coke and as many limes as they can find.

If I ever went into Bert's and ordered a different meal, utter confusion and shock would break out.

Like the old Alka-Seltzer commercial from 1971: "Try it you'll like it." Jesus is saying try something:

B. Unpredictable (Grace)

Even in the Old Testament, grace comes before Law (**Exodus**)! God sets his people free, leads them out of Egypt, calls the Israelites His people - *then* gives them the Law.

It is not that the New Covenant of grace does not have rules because there are standards and expectations, but now our salvation depends on God rather than us. If we are not perfect, it's OK, because God is perfect!

**I suppose in some ways the old wine may taste better because we have acquired a taste for it. But God is saying: I have something that may take some getting used to, but it is better - not because it is “new,” but because it is as old and dependable as my Word. I love you more than you deserve and certainly you can never earn what I will give you free for the asking.**

**Jesus was constantly accused of associating with the wrong people, and quite frankly that is what He wants from His Church.**

### **“The Agnes Story” by Tony Campolo**

**Jetlag can be brutal, and Tony Campolo had just arrived in Hawaii; he was hungry and he couldn't sleep. It was 3:00 a.m., though, and the only place open was a grungy dive in an alley in downtown Waikiki. As Tony sat there at the counter munching on his donut and sipping his coffee, in walked eight or nine prostitutes just finished with their night's work. They all sat down at the counter and Tony found himself uncomfortably surrounded by a whole group of smoking, swearing hookers, recounting their night on the street. He was finishing up his coffee, planning to make a quick getaway, when he heard the woman next to him say to her friend, “You know what? Tomorrow's my birthday. I'm gonna be 39.” Her friend replied nastily: “So what do you want from me? A birthday party? Huh? You want me to get a cake, and sing happy birthday to you?” The first woman said, “Aw, come on, why do you have to be so mean? Why do you have to put me down? I'm just saying it's my birthday. I don't want anything from you. I mean, why should I have a birthday party? I've never had a birthday party in my whole life. Why should I have one now?”**

**Tony suddenly had an idea. Instead of running off, he sat and waited until the women left, and then he asked the guy at the counter, “Do they come in here every night?”**

**“Yeah,” he answered.**

**“The one right next to me,” he asked, “she comes in every night?”**

**“Yeah,” he said, “that's Agnes. Yeah, she's here every night. She's been coming here for years. Why do you want to know?”**

**“Because she just said that tomorrow is her birthday. What do you think? Do you think we could maybe throw a little birthday party for her right here in the diner?” A smile crept over the man's face. “That's great,” he says, “yeah, that's great. I like it.”**

So they made their plans. Tony said he'd be back at 2:30 the next morning with some decorations and the man, whose name was Harry, said he'd make a cake. At 2:30 the next morning, Tony returned with crepe paper and other decorations and a sign made of big pieces of cardboard that said, "Happy Birthday, Agnes!" Together, they decorated the diner from one end to the other and it looked great. Harry had gotten the word out on the streets about the party and by 3:15 it seemed that every prostitute in Honolulu was in the place. At 3:30 on the dot, the door swung open and in walked Agnes and her friends. Everybody yelled together: "Happy Birthday, Agnes!" Agnes was absolutely flabbergasted. Her mouth fell open, her knees started to buckle, she almost fell over. And then the birthday cake with all the candles was carried out, and that's when she totally lost it and began weeping. Harry, who was not used to seeing a prostitute cry, gruffly mumbled, "Blow out the candles, Agnes. Cut the cake." So Agnes pulled herself together and blew them out. Everyone cheered and yelled, "Cut the cake, Agnes, cut the cake!"

But Agnes looked down at the cake and, without taking her eyes off it, slowly said, "Look, Harry, is it all right with you if...I mean, if I don't...I mean, what I want to ask, is it OK if I keep the cake a little while? Is it all right if we don't eat it right away?" Harry didn't know what to say so he shrugged and said, "Sure, if that's what you want to do. Keep the cake. Take it home if you want."

Agnes got off her stool, picked up the cake, and carried it high in front of her like it was the Holy Grail. Everybody watched in stunned silence and when the door closed behind her, nobody seemed to know what to do. They look at each other. They look at Tony. So Tony got up on a chair and said, "What do you say that we pray?"

And there they were in a hole-in-the-wall greasy spoon, half the prostitutes in Honolulu, at 3:30 a.m. listening to Tony Campolo as he prayed for Agnes.

When he finished, Harry leaned over, and with a trace of hostility in his voice, he said, "Hey, you never told me you were a preacher. What kind of church do you belong to anyway?"

It was one of those moments when just the right words came. Tony replied, "I belong to a church that throws birthday parties for prostitutes at 3:30 in the morning."

Harry thought for a moment, and in a mocking way said, "No you don't. There's no church like that. If there was, I'd join it. Yep, I'd join a church like that."

Tony then said, "There is a church like that, Harry - started by a man who did just that. Let me tell you about Jesus..."

**Conclusion:** How many of you here like to be wrong? And how many of you appreciate it when it is pointed out? Yet, Jesus, when pressed about his ministry, made it clear that the old covenant was obsolete, and that those who would follow him (new covenant) needed to realize they were wrong, sick and in need of a doctor. No matter what it seemed like, the old way (covenant), even though familiar and comfortable, was the road to destruction and would result in exclusion from the new Kingdom Jesus would lead. The sages of the Old Testament even knew:

**Proverbs 16:25 (NIV)** <sup>25</sup> There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.

Jesus brings life with his new covenant of grace for all those who believe in him.

**Revelation 21:5-8 (NIV)** <sup>5</sup>He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” <sup>6</sup>He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. <sup>7</sup>He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

**Yet a poor choice, i.e. rejecting Jesus’ offer, will yield a much different outcome!**

<sup>8</sup>But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

There are only two choices, and they are clear. Jesus offers life! Every other way leads to death! Why not follow Jesus, today?