

New Wine, New Wineskins

Isaiah 55:6-9

Luke 6:20-36

Recap last week:

- What do we know of Jesus?
 - his authority and power
 - his heart – “came to seek and save the lost” “friend of tax collectors and sinners” “did not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance” (5.32) “gentle and lowly” (Matt 11)
- Jesus revealed hearts (2.35). Pharisees v’s sinners (like paralytic, woman in ch. 7, Good Samaritan, Zacchaeus)
 - Danger of being religious but not knowing Jesus/his presence (2.41-43; John 14.9)
- Concluded with parables about patches on garments, wine and wineskins. New wine = gospel of Jesus, kingdom. Wineskins = human hearts (rather than religious structures, though they too have the properties of old wineskins).
New wine into new wineskins = “the love of God which has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Rom 5.5).

Between last week and this week = 6.1-16

- Laws around Sabbath (1-11). Jesus shows just how far removed from Mosaic law pharisaic practice had become.
As usual, goes to the heart of the issue: “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it” (v.9). i.e. any Sabbath law/interpretation of Mosaic law which does harm is not from God, and therefore not true.
Not new teaching as David lived by this interpretation (6.3-4).
- Calling of Twelve Apostles. About forming a (re)new(ed) ‘Israel’.
Won’t send them out until 9.12.
⇒ First sets about forming men after his own heart, teaching them.

6.17-49 = Luke's *Sermon on the Plain* (cf. Matt 5-7), though only ¼ of its length. In both, Jesus institutes a new covenant.

- has established that he has the authority and power to do so.

Great multitude from Judea, Jerusalem, Tyre and Sidon came (i.e. from everywhere, and incl. gentiles)

- To hear
- Be healed
- Be delivered of demons

"And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all."

The words that follow are directed at the disciples (v.12), although "in the hearing of the people" (7.1). Conclusion: Jesus did nothing in secret, but openly, for all to see and hear.

Blessed:

- The poor (now), hungry now, weep now... *for yours is the kingdom, you shall...* "The poor' in Luke = all those who have been marginalised in the larger world, economically or otherwise....

Rich and poor = about power, privilege, social status. The rich "are those whose material prosperity has warped their personal orientation to God and their fellows" (Nolland).

- When people hate you, exclude you, revile you, spurn your name as evil – on account of the Son of Man! (badge of authenticity)
Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

i.e. the "people" who persecute them are fellow Jews, probably religious and political leaders (see 11.47), the descendants of those who persecuted OT prophets.

Woe:

- The rich (now), full now, laugh now
- When people speak well of you, for so *their fathers did* to the *false* prophets

Message:

1. We must see as God sees. When God's kingdom comes, everything will be turned upside down, and recipients of blessings and woes reversed (cf. Mary's words in 1.46-55, and parable of rich man and Lazarus in 16.19-31). whereas the world despises the poor and needy, and exalts the rich and those of 'high status', God looks with compassion on the needy, and is offended by the proud and self-sufficient
2. The hearts of those who oppress now, and prefer false prophets to true, are the same as their evil fathers in OT.

Expected (human) response = "good job, the wicked will get their come-uppance!"

BUT

vv.27-42, Jesus seems to contradict what he has just said:

- Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you
- Bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you
- To the one who strikes you on cheek, (the phrase is brawny, 'to get socked in the jaw'" [Edwards]) offer other also
- To one who steals cloak, surrender tunic also
- Give to the one who begs, do not demand back goods taken from you

As you wish that others would do to you, do so to them

- If you love those who love you... even sinners do that
- If you do good to those who do good to you... even sinners do the same
- If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive... even sinners lend to sinners

i.e. this is world's ethic

Love your enemies

Do good

Lend expecting nothing in return

i.e. reject the Greco-Roman social world and its system of reciprocity. Need to understand NT world: shame and honour culture; importance of status; patronage system (obligation/debt, to be repaid materially or by giving of honour/praise).

Have no enemies/count no one as your enemy.

Treat everyone as family/kin – to whom give freely and unconditionally, out of love.

Your reward will be great

You will be sons of the Most High

For he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.

Be merciful, even as your father is merciful.

i.e, kingdom ethics = rooted not in reciprocity (i.e. not determined by the prior behaviour of others toward one) but in the character of God. The children of the Most High should be like the Father - bearing his image.

This = why have so few commandments: the few do have are indicative of the character of the disciple, the sons/daughters of the most High. These few commandments provide sufficient examples of how they will behave.

SUMMARY:

1. We must not only see as God sees, we must do as God does.
2. isn't about rules but about the right heart and attitude. If one adopts these simple principles (love, kindness/goodness, generosity [incl. when judging others], mercy), then there is no need for specific rules.
3. It is all about being like God, having Jesus's heart (Matt 11.28-30). See this in Jesus' life – as he pours out healing and salvation in abundance, ministers to the poor, lifts burdens of the weary and heavy laden, weeps over the city which rejects him (Jerusalem), and forgives those who kill him (23.34).
4. God's ways are not ours (Isa 55); he does not act as he 'should'; but is *always*, to the uttermost, kind and merciful. (even more than his justice and mercy go together, his kindness and his mercy do). The new wine skins are human hearts, and the new wine is God's love (incl. his kindness and mercy) poured into them by his Spirit.

Reading to the end of this 'sermon', Instead of relishing the reversal that has come/will indeed come, we are to:

- a. pray for those who are rich, or oppressors, or evil – our 'enemies'
 - b. AND not to judge people, assuming that it is we who will be blessed and they who will be punished
 - c. Make sure build your life on rock and produce the fruit of the kingdom.
- INTEGRITY is key! Must be like Jesus.

Suggested Discussion Questions

1. Why did people take such offence at Jesus?
2. Is it for the same reasons that many take offence at Christians today? i.e. is it because of our faithfulness, or our unfaithfulness – or both? What can/should we do about this?
3. How good are we at rejoicing when God blesses others? What may hold us back, or provoke feelings of jealousy or resentment?
4. What does it mean, practically, to do good to enemies and to bless them?
5. What do you think Jesus meant by "do not judge", particularly in the context of what has gone before?
6. What constitutes a 'good foundation' (vv. 46-49)?

You might consider praying for one another, for the Lord's Spirit to renew and fill all our hearts with his love, generosity and mercy.