

Introduction:

When I was a kid and I wanted to talk to a friend of mine on the phone, I would walk to the kitchen. I would take the phone off the hook and sit on the chair by the table. I'd have to be careful with the cord to make sure that no one walking through would trip on it. I had memorized a lot of my friends phone numbers. So, I'd punch in the numbers and wait.

I was talking to a friend of mine once when we heard this click. The sound of someone picking up the phone to listen, then hanging up. Then it happened again a little while later. Then the next time it happened a man talked and simply said something like, "I have an important call to make, so I would appreciate if you could end your call soon." *click. My friend had something called a party line. For those of you who don't know what that is, it's when you share your phone line with multiple people. And if you weren't careful, you could have neighbors listening in to private conversations.

Take a look at my phone now. I have an iPhone. When I want to call someone I just reach in my purse and I can call no matter where I am. No cords to trip on. I can walk around while I talk. I don't have to memorize anyone's numbers because they are all saved on here. And this phone does more than just call people. I can check my email on it. I can take pictures with it. I can text my friends. I can count how many steps I take every day. It can do all sorts of stuff.

The phone has drastically improved over the years. There is nothing wrong with the party line, but that era has run its course. It's inferior. However, I'm sure there are some people who still prefer it. They might look at the new phones and think, "why would I want that? My party line is fine. Sure, it's a bit of an inconvenience at times, but I like it. I don't want to change. I'm comfortable where I'm at." And those of us with new phones might say, "just try it. You'll love it. You can talk anywhere. No one can listen in or tell you to hang up. Out with the old. In the new."

Page 1 - TT - Ran out of Wine/OT

This is the theme of our passage this morning. Out with the old. In with the new. The old is inferior. The new is superior. Let's look at it again with a bit of a closer lens.

In the Ancient Near East they had cultural wedding practices. Their wedding parties could last for a week. People would come and go throughout the celebration. So, many of the guests had probably walked for a couple days to get there. Then when they got there, before they could enter into the party, there was something that everyone had to do.

They had to wash at least their hands and feet. They had to enter into a purification rite before entering into the wedding feast. There were 6 stone water jars at this wedding that were used for these ceremonial washings. Each held 75-115 Litres. So, we can imagine the guests all coming in, looking for the water jars to clean themselves. Then, after this purification rite, they were allowed to enter into the wedding feast.

The bridegroom was responsible to provide everything for his guests. Everything that he bought for the party had to last until it was over. For the entire week. I know what your thinking. Yes, it was expensive. One thing he had to provide was enough wine. It was always custom to serve the better wine first.

But, something scandalous has happened. The bridegroom ran out of wine. He couldn't provide for his guests. He was not only subject to much shame, but also he could face a potential lawsuit for his lack of hospitality. Mary, the mother of Jesus catches wind of this and she responds with great compassion. She runs to her son. She knows he can help. And he does. Mary told the servants to do whatever Jesus asked. She took the lead then she faded into the background. And Jesus came to the forefront. Mary decreased so Jesus could increase.

He tells the servants – See those 6 stone jars? The ones that are being used for cleaning people's hands and feet? Fill them up with water. The servants did what Jesus told them and filled them to the brim. Then he instructs them to take some to the master of the banquet.

And the master loves the wine. He tastes it and sees that it is good. He's not only blown away by how good it is, but he's especially astonished as to *when* the bridegroom served it. This was not what he expected. He says to the bridegroom, "everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you...you have kept the good wine until now. You have saved the best for last."

This bible story is about so much more than Jesus changing water into wine. Let's look at Luke chapter 5 to understand it better. Here Jesus tells a parable about wine and wine skins. He says this:

He told them this parable: “No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say, “The old is better.””

In this parable, the Old Covenant, or Old Testament, is symbolized with old wine. It is worn out. It's stretched out. In our text this morning it tells us that the wine has run out, symbolizing that the Old Covenant has run out. Nothing is wrong with the Old Covenant, but that era has run its course. It's inferior.

Page 2 – GT – OT fulfilled. New Wine/NT

The New Covenant is symbolized with new wine. It points to a new era. The wine had run out, but now the jars have been filled to the brim – showing that the Old Covenant is now filled or fulfilled. Jesus fulfilled the Old Covenant. The new one is better. It is superior. The water changed to wine.

Wine in those days was a very special drink. The other option when one wanted to drink was water. There was nothing wrong with the water. But it was inferior to wine. Wine was better. When Jesus changed the water to wine it symbolized the transition from the Old Covenant era to the New Covenant. Jesus himself is that change. Out with old. In with the new. The inferior is replaced by the superior.

You might be wondering now what the difference is between the Old Covenant and New Covenant. What is so good about the New Covenant? What makes it better? What does that mean for us now? There are multiple changes Jesus brings with the New Covenant, the one that this particular text focuses on is the change in how we are cleansed.

Remember the purification rite in the story? When people finally arrived after their long journey and wanted to enter into the wedding feast – first they had to stop at the stone water jars and wash. Only then could they enter into the wedding feast. In the first miracle ever recorded, Jesus used the water that was intended for cleansing and changed it. He made it better. He created wine.

Under the Old Covenant, God's wrath upon sin was poured out on animals instead of humans. So, that meant that God's people had to continually sacrifice animals as a temporary covering of sins in light of the coming Messiah. Day after day every priest stood and performed his religious duties; again and again he offered the same sacrifices, which could never take away sins.

Jesus has paid the penalty for all of our sins once and for all on the cross. For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. Jesus is the better and superior bridegroom. He will not run out of grace and will never fail to provide for his children the complete forgiveness of sins. He is preparing his bride, us – the church, by actively cleansing us of our sin and making us holy and blameless to present ourselves to him without blemish. We are becoming what we already are.

What good news we have! These last days are the best days because the best wine is now being served. First it was the poor wine, now we have the best wine. The gospel. The gospel is being preached all over the world.

And those of us who have heard the gospel, who have tasted and seen how good the new covenant is, are proclaiming it. People of God, hear the gospel: "Repent. Believe in Christ. Then you will be made righteous before God." Now is the day of celebration. Now is the time of the Lord's favor. Jesus was not what the people expected. He didn't come when they thought. And we are blown away at how good He is. No wonder Jesus performed this miracle at a party! It was a cause for great joy and great celebration. God has saved the best for last. Himself.

Now, let us imagine our entrance into the final wedding celebration. There won't be pitchers of water for us to wash with because we have already been made clean. Purified with blood, not with water. All made possible because of the blood of Christ. And we arrive to find that we have entered into our own wedding: Our everlasting marriage to the Lamb of God. And we will finally get to see Jesus and we will declare, "Jesus...you have indeed saved the best for last. You have given us yourself."

The new covenant is great news for us. We always live in the present, but we do so with our eyes on eternity. In light of knowing what Christ has done and what is to come, we have the courage and strength to continue living according to the new covenant.

Page 3 TW –We like the Old Better.

As we saw in our Luke 5 passage, there were still some who did not want the new, because they thought that the old is better. The Pharisees might have said, "why would I want that? The Old Covenant is fine. Sure, it's a bit of an inconvenience at times, like when I have to take time to sacrifice animals to pay for my sins to cleanse me to be right with God, but hey - I like it. I don't want to change. I'm comfortable where I'm at."

The Pharisees were human just like us and when they heard the good news they resisted. Because they liked their old ways. They liked the system of measuring their own righteousness. They wanted to participate in their salvation. They didn't want to try the new way that Jesus was introducing. Human beings, including us, have a hard time with change. Although we hear this good news and accept it, we still have a tendency to go back to our old ways. Because we naturally think that that is better. We resist. And it's easy for us to deny that.

In a broad sense, the global church still struggles with the concept of the gospel. The idea that Christ's sacrifice is enough for the complete forgiveness or complete cleansing of our sins is hard to grasp. An obvious example of course is what led to the Reformation when the Catholic church was preaching that people had to do penance in addition to faith to be made righteous with God. I want us to recognize then that's it's easy for us to think that this was taken care of already. We think that the Reformers figured all that stuff out. Now we all know that we are made righteous before God by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Christ sacrifice is all-sufficient.

So, I think we get it in this broad sense. When I said that, I'm sure many of us agreed in our head. We totally believe this. So, let's zoom in a little and look at how we live where we might inadvertently try to cleanse ourselves. Where we might try to measure our own righteousness. Because we are still prone to the old ways. I thought of a few examples. But this is something I'd like everyone to think about when we go home. Where in our life do we prefer the old way?

One example is how we engage in spiritual disciplines. The most common ones are reading our bible, praying, and attending church regularly. Others could be fasting or intentional acts of service. Do we engage in them because we are checking a mental box in our head that we are doing what we are supposed to be doing. We might feel really good that we did it. But it can also have the opposite affect on us. When we don't do these things, we can struggle intensely with guilt or condemnation. And so we try again. And maybe we think it's ok. Maybe we think it's not really that bad. We look at our life and think, "My life is good. Sure, it's a bit of an inconvenience at times, to measure my righteousness and feel condemnation when I don't pray enough, but my life is fine."

Another example is maybe we are easily plagued with memories from our past. We feel guilty about things that have happened and think God is punishing us. Or something bad happens and we think that it's because of our sin. And maybe we think it's ok. We might think, "My life is good. Sure, it's a bit of an inconvenience to believe that the wrath of God is hanging over me, but that's life. I can deal with it."

A third example is maybe we like our sin and are unwilling to change. Maybe we like to gossip. Maybe we like to spend all our money on ourselves. Maybe we like to complain. Maybe we like to swear. We heard that we're clean because of Christ, so we can live however we want. Maybe we think, "My life is good. Sure, it's a bit of an inconvenience to hear about my sin on Sunday mornings, but I like it. I'm going to get to heaven anyways. I don't want to change. I'm comfortable where I'm at."

Page 4 – GW – Gospel is being preached

Friends in Christ. Let us not be ok with any of those things. They are more than inconveniences, they are hindrances to the gospel. Jesus came to give us life and to the fullest. Not just eternal life, but a full life here on earth. Hear the gospel again. Hear it now. Hear it tomorrow. Hear it the day after that. Day after day hear the gospel: "Repent. Believe in Christ. Then you will be made righteous with God."

In this new era, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. If our desire to read scripture and pray and worship the Lord on Sundays is to make us feel good – then that's the old way. Those things aren't in the Bible to make us righteous. They are gifts given to us to response to God's grace. Our motivation comes from grace, not guilt. If the enemy tries to condemn us, let us use the power of God's word and kick that guilt out.

In this new era, we have moved from God's wrath to God's favor. God's entire wrath upon sin was poured out on Jesus on that cross. Do we suffer and are disciplined still? Yes, of course. But God is not mad at us. He does not hold our past sin against us. We may still feel the natural affects of our past sin, but for those who have repented it has been completely washed away.

In this new era, we are not comfortable with our sin. We hate our sin. God has cleansed us and is still cleansing us. If we are comfortable in our sin then perhaps we have forgotten the first word of the gospel: Repent. Believe in Christ. Then you will be made righteous with God. We obey God, not to earn our righteousness, but because it pleases him and is evidence of our salvation.

Let us put our old ways of how we think about cleansing behind us. That way of life is inferior. Don't stay in it. Out with the old. In with the new. Let everything we do, whether we eat or drink, let is be for the glory of God.

Maybe some of you here today like your old life. You've seen us church goers and think that maybe that life is ok and you're interested in it. But you like your life as it and don't want to change. Maybe someday, but not today. I challenge you to recognize that. The old way is not better. The old way is inferior. Jesus is better. Jesus is best. Jesus is superior. If you have been feeling the gospel pound on your heart and you've been ignoring it, today is the day for you to respond. Maybe you want to be in charge of when, but NOW is the time for you to repent. Believe in Christ. Then you will be made righteous. If that's you, please come find me or another pastor after the service and we'd be thrilled to talk more with you about it.

The last verse in our text tells us that when Jesus performed this miracle, he revealed his glory and his disciples put their faith in him. What did God reveal to you through his word this morning? Pause for a moment and think about that. It's significant. The strengthening of our faith is an act of the grace of God. It reveals God's glory in our lives. Let God strengthen our faith. Let us live with a faith so powerful and active that it draws attention to Christ and to the good news of the new covenant. May God be glorified in our church.

Next Sunday we will be celebrating the feast of the Lord's Supper. And you'll also recall that wine is one of the elements. The Lord's Supper ultimately fulfilled the celebration of the Passover feast in the Old Covenant, of which wine was involved. Wine is also a symbol of Jesus' blood that was shed on the cross for the complete cleansing of all our sins.

Let us examine ourselves this week before God as we prepare to partake in the gift of the Lord's Supper. May this sacrament strengthen us in our faith, establish us in our hope, and confirm us in our love.

Amen