



Sunday 10th January 2021

Today we start a series looking at some of the parables in Mark's Gospel. Some of these parables will be recorded in the other Gospels and some won't, but each parable will hopefully bring us all a fresh message of encouragement, strength or peace according to our needs. Some of these parables may be familiar to us and some not so familiar, but I hope and pray that God will speak to each one of us through these parables in a new and special way according to our needs.

Read Mark 2 v 21-22

Do you ever wish you had a new body? Do you ever wish you could replace part of your body with a new better part? I am sure at many times we have all wished that something could change with our bodies, and new parts added or something made smaller or possibly bigger. Whilst some people may choose to have changes made to their appearance through plastic surgery, most of us don't. We accept, possibly not always happily, the bodies that God has given us. This parable is not talking about our physical skin as we shall see.

This is an interesting parable – as it comes suddenly in the middle of Jesus answering a question about fasting. What has fastening and new wine skins got to do with each other – nothing in my mind. There does not seem to be any logic in why this parable is included where it is. It is highly probable that these two teaching from Jesus happened at different times but are recorded together. When I looked up the meaning of this parable in one of my commentaries, from scholars who have studied the bible a lot more than me, there is a wonderful meaning that is of course, still relevant for us today.

Matthew, Mark and Luke all record this parable in the same context as each other, in other words while Jesus is answering a question about fasting, he drops in this parable about wine and wine skins. Remember in Jesus' time glass wasn't in general use, so liquid was either stored in stone jars or for wine in animal skins. The thing is that as the wine ferments, it slowly weakens the animal skins and if you were to pour new wine in a used wineskin, it would probably burst and all the wine would go down the drain. What a waste! If you try and patch up a used wineskin it will still be weak and if used would let the wine drip out or burst, again what a waste. For us today the thought of wine being stored in an animal skin, doesn't sound very appealing, but in Jesus' time this was the way that wine was stored. Remember that parables were one of the ways that Jesus used to get his message across in a way that people listening would hopefully understand and relate to. We know of course, that often even Jesus' disciples did not understand the parables and would ask him later for an explanation.



What was Jesus trying to tell his listeners with parable? Remember at this time, the 'new' Christianity that Jesus was bring to the people, was so different to the Jewish tradition of the time, that many people had trouble accepting it and even adjusting to it. Jesus is saying very simply that you cannot patch the new Christianity onto the old Jewish tradition. Jesus is promising and teaching a new way and a new life, one that is even better than people were expecting. Jesus is saying he is the new wine, think of one of the seven 'I am' sayings from John's Gospel – I am the way, the truth and the life, John 14 v 6. In this statement Jesus is saying the only way to God is though him, the 'new' way from now on. In the parable that we are looking at today, Jesus is saying that the new way is to let him fill you afresh as a new person.

We all know that if we drink too much wine (or other alcoholic drink) we become drunk and often act out of character or irresponsibility, but we can have lots of the Holy Spirit and it will affect us in a good way.

Think about the first time you let God come into your life, how wonderful that felt. Think about other times you have felt God fill your life with his Holy Spirit and how refreshing that is. I know we can't have new bodies, but we can be made new through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In these very challenging times that we are currently in, we still have that same promise from God and his Son Jesus, that every day he will pour new wine in to us, the new wine is of course the Holy Spirit. God will then guide us as to where we can pour this out so that we can make a difference to those around us.

May we all be filled afresh with the Holy Spirit this week so that we can share God's love with those around us he needs us to.

AMEN