

3/15/26

Sermon Title: The Arrival of a New Era

Preacher: Pastor Kim Soonbae

Scripture Passage: Matthew 9:14-17

Jesus Questioned About Fasting

¹⁴ Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?"

¹⁵ Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.

¹⁶ "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse.

¹⁷ Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

After calling Matthew the tax collector to be His disciple, Jesus accepted Matthew's invitation and went to his house.

There He attended the banquet Matthew had prepared and ate with tax collectors and sinners.

When the Pharisees and the disciples of John the Baptist saw this scene, they questioned why Jesus was participating in a feast with sinners and raised a question about fasting.

In response, Jesus said that this was a time to rejoice and enjoy the life of the kingdom of heaven that He had brought.

Using the parables of the unshrunk cloth and the new wine, He explained that a new era had arrived.

John's disciples asked Jesus why they and the Pharisees fasted, but Jesus' disciples did not fast.

Matthew records that it was John's disciples who asked the question, while Luke records that it was the Pharisees who asked it.

It seems likely that the disciples of John and the Pharisees were in agreement and came together to ask Jesus this question.

¹⁴ Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?"

John lived a strict ascetic life centered on fasting and prayer.

(Matt 11:18) For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.'

John's disciples also followed their teacher's example and practiced fasting.

Together with the Pharisees, they observed the national fast days such as the Day of Atonement, as well as the fast on the ninth day of the month of Av, when people mourned the destruction of the First and Second Temples.

They also fasted twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays, and at other times as well.

Moreover, at that time their teacher, John the Baptist, had been imprisoned because of his confrontation with Herod Antipas.

Therefore, they were fasting in sorrow over their teacher's imprisonment.

Because of this, they found it strange that although their teacher—who was the forerunner of Jesus and had even baptized Him—had been arrested and put in prison, the disciples of Jesus were not mourning with them.

In response, Jesus answered by comparing Himself to the bridegroom and His disciples to the guests at a wedding feast.

He taught that the guests of the bridegroom—that is, His disciples—had no reason to fast while the bridegroom was with them, showing that He Himself is the Lord of the fast.

¹⁵ Jesus answered, “How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.

In many places in the Old Testament, God is compared to a bridegroom.

(Hos2:16) “In that day,” declares the LORD, “you will call me ‘my husband’; you will no longer call me ‘my master.’”

(Hos2:17) I will remove the names of the Baals from her lips; no longer will their names be invoked.

(Hos2:18) In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky and the creatures that move along the ground. Bow and sword and battle I will abolish from the land, so that all may lie down in safety.

(Hos2:19) I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion.

(Hos2:20) I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD. Likewise,

(Isa54:5) For your Maker is your husband—the LORD Almighty is his name—the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth.

(Isa54:6) The LORD will call you back as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit—a wife who married young, only to be rejected,” says your God.

(Isa54:7) “For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back.

(Isa54:8) In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you,” says the LORD your Redeemer.

In the Old Testament, the bridegroom at the wedding feast is God, not the Messiah.

However, Jesus implied that the wedding feast was His own, revealing that He is the Son of God.

John the Baptist also once referred to Jesus as “the bridegroom” and himself as “the friend who hears the bridegroom’s voice.”

(Jon3:22) After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized.

(Jon3:23) Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were coming and being baptized.

(Jon3:24) (This was before John was put in prison.)

(Jon3:25) An argument developed between some of John’s disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing.

(Jon3:26) They came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—look, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him.”

(Jon3:27) To this John replied, “A person can receive only what is given them from heaven.

(Jon3:28) You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.’

(Jon3:29) 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.

(Jon3:30) He must become greater; I must become less.

For this reason, the disciples of John the Baptist would likely have remembered the words of their teacher when they heard Jesus’ parable.

Jesus said, “But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.”

The phrase “when the bridegroom will be taken from them” refers to the day when Jesus would be crucified and die on the cross.

In other words, He was foreshadowing His suffering and death.

Those who participate in the ministry of Jesus are like friends or guests invited to a wedding banquet.

Therefore, there is no reason for them to fast.

They should celebrate and rejoice.

However, when the bridegroom is taken away, they will fast.

Jesus' answer contains both messianic and eschatological meaning.

Through this response, Jesus implied that He is the bridegroom—the Messiah who was prophesied in the Old Testament to come in the last days—and that the long-awaited age had already arrived.

Jesus also described the nature of the ministry He was carrying out by comparing it to a piece of unshrunk cloth.

¹⁶ “No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse.

Unshrunk cloth is fabric that has never been washed.

When it is washed in water, it shrinks.

Therefore, if a piece of unshrunk cloth is sewn onto an old garment as a patch, the patch will shrink when the garment is washed, pulling on the old fabric and causing the tear to become worse.

For this reason, attaching cloth in such a way is a foolish thing to do.

The piece of unshrunk cloth symbolizes the gospel of the kingdom of heaven that Jesus brought, while the old garment represents the customs of the old age, such as fasting.

Through this parable, Jesus is saying that although the teachings of the Pharisees required many fasts and ascetic religious practices, these things cannot harmonize with the new gospel He brought.

In other words, if the gospel of Jesus Christ were to be grafted onto the old religion of Judaism, the religious system and rituals of Judaism—like an old garment—would not be able to contain the new gospel and would eventually fall apart.

Jesus then goes on to describe the nature of the ministry He was carrying out by comparing it to wine.

¹⁷ Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.”

Wineskins were made by removing the entire hide of a sheep or goat and sewing it back together, leaving only the neck as the opening.

They were used to hold liquids such as wine.

However, old wineskins lose their elasticity.

If new wine is poured into them, they cannot withstand the pressure produced by fermentation and will burst.

For this reason, when new wine is stored, it must be put into new wineskins.

In the phrase “new wine must be poured into new wineskins,” the word *new* describing the wine is **neos**, meaning something new in a temporal sense.

In contrast, the word *new* describing the wineskins is **kainos**, meaning something qualitatively new—something renewed or recreated in its essential nature.

The new wine represents the gospel of the kingdom of heaven that is spreading through Jesus, while the old wineskins symbolize the traditional framework of Judaism.

The statement that new wine will burst old wineskins means that the ministry of Jesus cannot be contained within Judaism.

Through this parable, Jesus teaches that the new teaching and the kingdom He is inaugurating must be poured into a new community, not into the religion of form and tradition represented by Judaism.

The life-giving teaching of Jesus must not be forced into the weakened traditions and rituals of Judaism.

In other words, the teaching of Jesus and the teaching of the Pharisees cannot coexist.

The old covenant served only to lead to the new covenant, and the new covenant is both the fulfillment and the ultimate goal of the old covenant.

Beloved members of the Church of Godly Dreams,

Jesus did not come merely to revise the Law slightly or to add a few things to the existing religion.

He came to this world as the One who opens a new era and establishes the new covenant.

Jesus came to inaugurate a new age—the age of the Holy Spirit.

Through the parables of the unshrunk cloth and the new wine, Jesus taught that the new life of the kingdom of heaven cannot be contained within the old forms and traditions of religion.

Neither the Law nor the religious system of Judaism can contain the dynamic life of the new age.

Fasting, rituals, and regulations alone cannot bring people into the joy and life of the kingdom of heaven.

A lifeless, formal religion cannot hold the power of God's kingdom.

Jesus has called us as guests invited to a wedding banquet.

Life with Jesus, the bridegroom, is not a life of sorrow and empty formality, but a life of joy and life.

In Jesus we have received the forgiveness of sins and new life, and that life continues to grow and expand within us.

Jesus also said, "But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast."

By this He hinted that the gospel of the kingdom would be given through the suffering of the Messiah Himself.

The bridegroom's suffering and departure from the earth does not diminish the meaning of the feast.

Rather, the bridegroom sacrifices himself for those who enjoy the banquet.

Now it is the season of Lent.

As disciples who enjoy the joy of the banquet, we must not forget the sacrifice of Jesus, who suffered to open this new era.

We are called to follow Him with completely new principles and a new way of life.

We must put away legalism, authoritarianism, and fundamentalism, and instead receive Jesus, who Himself is the gospel.

We should not live bound by old habits and empty forms like old wineskins.

Rather, we must become new wineskins ready to hold the new wine.

We need open hearts that can receive the word of Jesus and the gospel.

Let us all have hearts that are open to the work of the Holy Spirit.

And to do that, let us cultivate humble hearts and obedient hearts.