

# New Clothes and New Wine Luke 5:33-6:5

by David Servant

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*Jesus teaches that His new teaching is like new wine that cannot be poured into old wineskins, and that people should not try to mix old and new things, but rather be open to His truth.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 9:14, Mark 2:18-27, Luke 6:1

**Topics:** "Sabbath Observance", "Spiritual Renewal"

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## Description

David Servant delivers a sermon on the Pharisees' struggle to accept Jesus' teachings, focusing on their misunderstanding of fasting and the Sabbath. Jesus emphasized the importance of spending time in prayer and recognizing His presence rather than following rituals blindly. He used illustrations of new cloth on old garments and new wine in old wineskins to highlight the need for a fresh perspective on spiritual matters. Jesus clarified that the Sabbath was made for people's benefit, not to burden them with unnecessary restrictions, asserting His authority as the one who gave the commandment.

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## Transcript

The Pharisees were a sect of Jews who prided themselves in their holiness. They thought they were fully obeying God's laws and were certain that God especially favored them because of it. Surely God, impressed by how they had kept their religious duties, would welcome them into His kingdom. But now they had a big problem, and His name was Jesus. He claimed to be an authority on spiritual matters, and His popularity as a religious teacher was rapidly growing as He traveled about teaching and healing. To the Pharisees' alarm, Jesus' teaching about holiness was much different from theirs. Some of those differences surfaced in today's reading, as the Pharisees vainly tried to find fault with Jesus.

The first fault the Pharisees found in Jesus was that He and His disciples didn't fast. When someone fasts, he stops eating food for a while for some religious purpose. Not eating for a day or two is not an easy thing to do, and the Pharisees prided themselves that they fasted often. They thought they were earning points from God for their self-sacrifice.

Of course, skipping meals is foolish and pointless unless it is something God wants a person to do. And if it is, you can be certain God has a good reason for wanting a person to fast, since He obviously created people with a need to eat food regularly in order to live! So why would God want someone to fast? Probably the most valid reason for fasting is to have more time to spend in God's Word and prayer. This was especially true in ancient times, when the preparation of meals took much more time than it does today.

Jesus didn't say that fasting was wrong. He only said that, because the Pharisees and religious leaders didn't understand who He was, they were fasting during a time when it wasn't necessary. The main reason to fast is to spend more time in prayer to God. But God was right in their midst! Why would they ever fast to try to get closer to God when they had direct access to Him in Jesus? Jesus said that people don't fast during someone's wedding simply because that is not an appropriate time to fast. It's a time to celebrate. Likewise, it was now a time to celebrate and enjoy God's presence! When Jesus returned to heaven, then they could intelligently resume their practice of fasting.

Then Jesus shared two illustrations that explained the heart of His problem with the Pharisees and religious leaders. Both illustrations present the folly of mixing new and old things.

Jesus said that people don't tear a piece of cloth from a new piece of clothing in order to patch a hole in an old piece of clothing. If they did, the new clothing would be ruined, and the old clothing would look bad with a patch that didn't match. The understanding of the Pharisees and religious teachers was like an old, worn-out garment that needed patching. But Jesus' teaching was like new clothing. It would be foolish to try to take a small part of Jesus' teaching and make it fit with the old ideas and traditions of the Pharisees. The only intelligent thing to do would be to simply discard the old, worn-out clothes and put on the new ones.

In His second illustration, Jesus mentioned wineskins. They were bottles made out of animal skins for the purpose of holding wine. Nobody would pour brand new wine into old wineskins, because as the grape juice fermented and released gas, the old, hard, inflexible wineskins would burst, and all the wine would be lost. People only put new wine into new wineskins that were more flexible and wouldn't burst as the grape juice fermented. The Pharisees and religious leaders were like the old, hardened, inflexible wineskins and Jesus was like the new wine. It was impossible for them to accept His new teaching because they were so set in their ways. They were satisfied with just holding the same old wine, and were unable to receive anything new and fresh from God. In fact, they considered their old understanding of spiritual matters to be superior. How wrong they were!

The second fault the Pharisees found with Jesus was His disregard of the law of the Sabbath. God did say in the Old Testament that the Sabbath should be a day of rest, and, therefore, no one should work on the Sabbath. The Pharisees, however, had taken that law to the extreme, claiming that Jesus and His disciples were sinning when they prepared a low-budget meal by breaking off heads of wheat in a field. It would be like claiming that you sinned by working on the Sabbath if you exerted effort in pouring milk over a bowl of breakfast cereal!

Jesus responded to their criticism by proving from the Old Testament that God was not opposed to what He and His disciples were doing. Once David had broken the law, eating bread that was supposed to be eaten only by the priests. David normally would not have eaten that consecrated bread, but he did it out of necessity because there was nothing else to eat, and he and his companions needed nourishment. God certainly understood, and He wasn't angry with David. The same was true concerning Jesus and His disciples. They needed to eat, and God wasn't angry with what they were doing. He gave the law of the Sabbath because He loves people and doesn't want them to work at their jobs seven days a week. He wants them to enjoy a day of rest. Picking a little grain to eat on the Sabbath is OK. Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made to benefit people, and not people to benefit the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

Beyond that, Jesus was God, and He is the One who gave the commandment about the Sabbath! So He certainly knew how to interpret His own law! Jesus' claim to be "master even of the Sabbath" (Luke 6:5) was equivalent to claiming to be God. The one who gives the law is greater than the law he gives. God can do anything He wants to do on the Sabbath, because He doesn't have to answer to anyone! On this occasion, Jesus acted like we would expect God to act, adding additional proof that He was who He claimed to be.

Q. Is it wrong to rake leaves in your yard or ride your bike up a steep hill on Sunday afternoon since God said the Sabbath should be a day of rest?

A. Only if you rake leaves for a living, and had raked leaves Monday through Saturday, then it might be wrong to rake leaves on Sunday! (And especially not if you are planning to jump in the pile of leaves you rake!) And only if you are a professional bike racer who had ridden his bike Monday through Saturday might it be wrong to ride your bike on a strenuous course on Sunday afternoon.

Additionally, the real Sabbath is not Sunday, but begins Friday evening and ends on Saturday evening! And the Sabbath commandment was not carried over into the New Covenant, proven by the fact that it is not found in any of the letters to the churches in the Bible.

Application: Aren't you glad that your heart and mind are not closed, like the Pharisees', to Jesus' teaching? Some people's minds are like concrete: thoroughly mixed and well set! Ask God today to open your mind and heart even more, and show you if you are like an old wineskin in any way.

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/david-servant/new-clothes-and-new-wine-luke-533-65/>

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