

New Wine into New Wineskins

God says: You can only put this new wine into new wineskins (Mark 2:22)

John 2:1-11

John 2:12-25

Before Christmas we saw John share with us his mature reflection on Who Jesus is (Silence Breaker, Darkness Destroyer, Family Maker, Sin Bearer, Promise Keeper, Glory Restorer & Heaven Opener):summed up in His utter uniqueness, with the overriding invitation to: Come & See (v46)! The temptation is now to jump straight to John 3: You must be Born Again, but if we do that we will not be ready to recognise or receive Him. Chapter 2, containing the first of the seven signs, tells of the New Wine of the Kingdom of God personified in Jesus, the need for new Wineskins (Individual and Church: marriage and temple), and yet the reality of the heart of sinful human beings who can not of themselves recognise and receive Him. This is a crucial chapter for all who still think they and the Church are good enough for God! This is the grit in the oyster of your life and mine that is driving us crazy (spiritually and even physically) yet preparing us ultimately for the pearl of faith in Jesus. So Jesus launches His ministry at a party. What he did, in turning water into wine, was obviously a kingdom symbol. The 'water' of the old covenant was now being replaced by the full, rich, palate-tingling wine of the new - that is, of true life that is abundant. Great wine is better than insipid water! But in acknowledging the clear symbolism, let's not miss the context: a warm wedding celebration about to be spoiled by the wine supplies running out - a disaster for the good name of the host. It's a domestic miracle, the startling touch of the supernatural invading a very everyday crisis of supplies running out. No-one was going to starve as a result of the wine drying up - but a bride's day - in fact her wedding week, because these events lasted for seven days - would have been spoiled, her family honour sullied by a social faux pas that would have been the subject of jokes and gibes for years. Jesus stepped in. Is this not the way faith often operates? We have no concrete idea about what God will do, how exactly He might help us, but as we bring our very

ordinary issues to Him each day we open ourselves to the possibility of a beautiful surprise.

So as the Song goes the invitation is clear: **Come on in and taste the New Wine!** And all of this note took place on the third day: now where have I heard that before!!! John is saying that this is life: the norm of the Kingdom!

This is **The Wine of His Presence (v1f)**: The presence of Jesus at the Wedding at Cana transformed the ordinary into the extra-ordinary! He is the Family Maker and when he is honoured in a relationship it will mean that relationship has the potential to be of the highest quality. This Holy Spirit Vintage wine transforms relationships: (3 examples) 1. Saviour will you take this Sinner, Sinner will you take the Saviour (with God the answer is always yes, yes, yes!). 2. Relationships in the Body of Christ put most profoundly: Love One Another as I have loved you. 3. Marriage Relationships: the wine of agape and the friendship of phileo. So taste the new wine of His presence and see how he will transform your relationships.

This is **The Wine of His Obedience (v5)**: The Promise Keeper keeps His Word: do you? Mary's only other uttered words outside the birth narratives present a huge challenge to us all who claim to be His Disciples: Do whatever He Tells You. Do is an action word. Whatever leaves no room for me to be choosy. He says that this comes with the authority of Jesus. Tells says that He speaks and we listen: no debate. You means you can't avoid this, you can't pass the buck. The reality however is that Jesus too was under direction: John 5:19. His whole life here on earth was under moment-by-moment direction from His Father. The Father told Him: what to say and how to say it: John 12:49. Think about it for a moment and it's the same with us: we need direction and we get it from God the Father through His Word, His Holy Spirit, and following the example of Christ. Not only do Wise Men still seek Him but Faithful Servants do what the Master says: Mary (Luke 1:38), John 13:16-17. So taste the new wine of His Obedience and find fruitfulness and joy beyond your dreams.

This is **The Wine, which fills you to the Brim (v7)**: Of course you need to be empty first to be filled: so that puts all on the same level. Nothing

in my hands I bring: simply to the Cross I cling. This is about Life Now: not Pie in the sky when I die but Steak on the plate while I wait. It's the Life that John describes later in 10:10, abundant, overflowing, energetic, and joyful; it's the Streams of Living Water in 7:38! It's the overflow that is at work as day upon day we are filled with the Holy Spirit so that we effect all around us: the spiritual drunkenness of Pentecost, the 'be being filled' command of Ephesians 5: 18. It's the naturally supernatural normal Christian Life where nothing is impossible for God: Kingdom Reality rather than Worldly constraint. So taste the new wine and be filled to overflowing: vintage life of Jesus for the world He loves.

Finally this is **The Best Wine, which is yet to come (v10, 11)**: a sign of the Glory being restored. This is the Resurrection foreseen: the Third Day Vintage Wine that is by far the Best and its God's gift to His children. Such wine represents the Hope of Glory (Christ's Return), and gave the Disciples a taste of Kingdom Glory Filled Living, which caused them to leave behind all and put their faith in Him.

David Watson on the brink of death from Cancer in February 1984 said: I know the reality of God; I know that He will see me through death, that it is just an open door. I know that whatever happens, the best is yet to be, which I've often said to other people but I had to say it to myself: the best is yet to come.

So the Wine is clearly to be abundant and the Wedding Day a success but what about the Marriage: what Marriage you say? The Wine has to go into a Wineskin: so again don't check out of John 2 at v11 for you will miss the huge challenge of the second half of the chapter!

Come Holy Spirit and make me a new Wineskin (v13-25): The principal I have often spoken on throughout the last thirty years remains true even in the new season of blessing and harvest: No Revival without Wineskins of Repentance: for John has Jesus at the end of the chapter saying that He knew the heart of Man (v23-25): he needed to be born again! In 1991 the Lord gave me a picture of a mast and sails but no boat: He was saying a big no to free wheeling Church hoppers. So how can we prepare in Unity to be a New Wineskin as Individual disciples and

as Church? John cleverly weaves the answer for us into Cleansing of the Temple narrative, which seems to be out of chronological order.

It says to us to **Ditch the Wineskin of Religion (v13ff)**: No messing, no polite dialogue, DIY Church must die, People Decide Church of Revelation 3:14 must cease! Cleanse the Temple, Lord: Give Jesus His Church back. Renounce Man Made Initiatives: build an altar and out on it all your pet schemes! Repent and seek God as Church: return to the simplicity of Acts 2:42-47. Stephen hit the nail on the head on Acts 7 when he dared to challenge a static religious temple plus stacks of traditions as compared with a Living God on the move: for that he was stoned.

It says to us to **Ditch the Wineskin of the Outward Mask! (v18)**: Cleanse my Temple Lord! This is a call to leave your comfort zone to allow God to have His way in your life totally. It is a call to grow in grace not in law (Pharisaism): faith not form, fun not frowns! It a call to let go of unconfessed sin and to stop holding unforgiveness from the Sin Bearer: the Lamb of God. It's a call to let God have His way and to let zeal for God consume you!

But it also requires us to **Put on the wineskin of His Death and Resurrection (v19f Romans 6:4,5)**: Build it again or was it Born Again? This is a stark challenge to Follow Him (1:43, Matthew 16:24, 1 John 2:6 whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did...to the Cross). It's a challenge to live a new life: remember a new life to start rather than a start to life. Like the Stylistics you will not just feel but will be Brand New! Then you will become an Ambassador in a Foreign Land (2 Corinthians 5:20): able to break in with God's Now Word (from the Silence Breaker) even though you feel like an alien or stranger.

So the final step **Let the Holy Spirit Build a Temple in Your Heart** in other words build a throne room in your heart and say: Come Lord Jesus and take your place! To do this we need to believe the Promise Keeper, Walk in the Light of Christ (destroying darkness) and live under heavens open door, the normal Christian life!

So St Andrews, what are the characteristics of a Wineskin Church:

Firstly it needs to be **Wineskin Creating**: Discipleship at its heart!

Unless we are all growing in our relationship with God and fruitfulness in His Service then we will not impact Canterbury: Life Groups, small cells,

Wesley's class system at its purest will begin to be the creative spiritual hub of St Andrews. Secondly a Wineskin Church needs to be **Wine Channelling**: Keep the new wine to yourself and you become a wine cellar: channel it out to the world in loving service, mercy ministries, and being good news and you become a wine supplier. Thirdly therefore it needs to be **Lost Focusing**: geared for those who are not as yet Christians, passionately praying and seeking to bring the multitudes into the Kingdom and placing a high emphasis on believers in their unique mission-fields (their work place, school, hospital etc.) being prayed for and supported. Finally it needs to be **Kingdom Building**: raising up new leaders, planting and establishing new congregations/expressions of Church, and doing it all as part of the whole Church in Canterbury and this area of East Kent. That's the kind of Church we want St Andrews to become and we will get there if we journey in unity of heart and mind. Note that John here does not paint Jesus as a dewy-eyed, somewhat insipid chap who neither threatens nor stirs. He sets out to show us what can happen as a result of genuine heartfelt life-changing conviction. So the disciples will eventually believe when they remember what Jesus said about the 'temple' of His body, just as some in the crowds believe when they see His miracles. But belief is an energetic, passionate force, not a mild assent to a set of dispassionate ideals. A Christian, far from being an inoffensive wimp with a vague slant towards religion, is someone with the potential to change the world and upset the status quo. As tables and coins go flying in the Temple Courts, Jesus makes an explosive entrance into public life, overturning corrupt religion. We see passion. What made Jesus so angry - and brave? At first glance, it appears that the money changers provoked His ire, and that this episode was simply about extortion and commercialisation. The changers were fleecing sincere worshippers - which warranted a whipping. But look again. Most commentators believe that the traders had set up their stalls in the Court of the Gentiles - the only place where non Jews could gather - and had turned it into a noisy, bustling thoroughfare. In Mark's Gospel Jesus explains that the Temple had always been intended as a 'house of prayer for all the nations' (Mark 11:17). Israel was called to be a lighthouse people, who would not keep the light of God to themselves,

but would be a prophetic signpost to the world. Holiness however, had turned into exclusivism (as so frequently happens), and Israel acted as if they owned the franchise on God. The chosen people had become the exclusive people. Please God that St Andrews will never become like that!

So God calls us to Christian living that is passionate, energetic and costly. Only then will a lost world be impacted by the good news.

Pastor David

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