

Worship @ Home 19.7.2020 **New wine skins for new wine**

Call to worship

Begin with a moment of quiet to settle your thoughts.

Psalm 34

- ¹ *I will extol the LORD at all times;
his praise will always be on my lips.*
² *I will glory in the LORD;
let the afflicted hear and rejoice.*
³ *Glorify the LORD with me;
let us exalt his name together.*

Hymn

StF 354 Jesus is the name we honour.
<https://youtu.be/H7D3Xn6c3dQ>

Jesus is the name we honour;
Jesus is the name we praise.
Majestic Name above all other names,
The highest heaven and earth proclaim
That Jesus is our God.

*We will glorify,
We will lift Him high,
We will give Him honour and praise.
We will glorify,
We will lift Him high,
We will give Him honour and praise.*

Jesus is the name we worship;
Jesus is the name we trust.
He is the King above all other kings,
Let all creation stand and sing
That Jesus is our God.

Jesus is the Father's splendour;
Jesus is the Father's joy.
He will return to reign in majesty,
And every eye at last shall see
That Jesus is our God.

Psalm 34 cont

- ⁴ *I sought the LORD, and he answered me;
he delivered me from all my fears.*
⁵ *Those who look to him are radiant;
their faces are never covered with shame.*
⁶ *This poor man called, and the LORD heard him;
he saved him out of all his troubles.*
⁷ *The angel of the LORD encamps around
those who fear him,
and he delivers them.*

Prayer

Lord as we seek to Glorify your name, we become acutely aware of our own failings. We thank you that you do not count our misdeeds but long to forgive - as your word promises.

So for those things that come between us we are deeply sorry. We lay our failings at the foot of the cross.

Lord for your many blessings - we thank you.

For the gift of your Son and his self giving - we thank you.

For your Holy Spirit, our advocate, guide and strength within - we thank you.

Open our hearts, minds and spirits we pray to your word today.

Amen

Scripture

Matthew 9 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."*

Context.

Jesus has called Matthew the tax collector, and has dined with him together with other tax collectors and "sinners". This has earned him a degree of disapproval. Jesus is then questioned by John the Baptist's disciples and the Pharisees as to why he and his disciples aren't fasting. Jesus' answers them, and then illustrates his point further with these two pictures, that of the un-shrunk cloth patch, and that of the new wine in old wine skins. I'm sure most of us can understand the first, but what about the second?

Wine in Jesus time was not kept in bottles, but skins. New wine is still active and so it needs new subtle skins to be flexible enough to withstand the pressures of the fermenting

wine. Old skins have become rigid and inflexible, and would crack under the strain.

What does Jesus mean by this? Well, Jesus is challenging the norm. He is not saying that fasting or following religious practice is wrong, but that following it for the sake of religion and not from the heart, is not right.

He knows that his new teaching and revelation will not sit comfortably with those who rigidly adhere to the old religion, although, as Jesus tells them, he hasn't come to replace the old, but to fulfil it (Matt 5 v 17).

We might think of the New Wine as being the wine of the Kingdom under direction of the Holy Spirit. And here we see confusion in the minds of John's disciples, and outright hostility from the Pharisees. The conflict between the old and the new that we see here will continue for the rest of Jesus' ministry and beyond.

The Acts of the Apostles

Following Pentecost I read through the book of the Acts of the Apostles, and one of the things that emerges in the early church is the recurring difficulty of reconciling the new teaching with the demands of the old religion. Arguments broke out about just how "Jewish" the followers of "The Way" had to be. The response from the elders in Jerusalem must surely have been the work of the Spirit. All they asked of the Gentile converts was to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, and to refrain from sexual immorality (Acts 15 v 20). New wine skins for the new wine of the Kingdom.

Lockdown

During this lockdown period the church has responded to the situation in many new ways. We have found new ways to worship and pray, new ways to serve, new ways to communicate and new ways to be church, in spite of, or perhaps because of, the challenges we have faced.

Some have not been able to take advantage of these new ways, and will feel bereft of the familiar patterns, but for others the new discoveries open up new and exciting ways of being church.

We might even say that the current situation has stripped back the church to what it really is, as we have prayed and worshipped and served and learned, we find we have successfully managed to be "Church" without

buildings and without structure of organised religion.

What we have mostly missed however are personal fellowship and physical togetherness. This should cause us to pause and ask questions about ourselves.

Questions to consider

Will the current situation and the things we have learned cause us to re-imagine church?

Having discovered new wine will we try to pour it back into the old wine skins?

Song

If you know the tune to this song by Graham Kendrick please join in, or use it as a spoken meditation.

https://youtu.be/bn_xKjk0yBc

The Wine of the Kingdom

One shall tell another
And he shall tell his friends
Husbands, wives and children
Shall come following on.
From house to house in families
Shall more be gathered in,
And lights will shine in every street
So warm and welcoming

*Come on in and taste the new wine
The wine of the kingdom
The wine of the kingdom of God
Here is healing and forgiveness
The wine of the kingdom
The wine of the kingdom of God*

Compassion of the Father
Is ready now to flow,
Through acts of love and mercy
We must let it show.
He turns now from His anger
To show a smiling face,
And longs that men should stand beneath
The fountain of His grace.
Come on in

He longs to do much more than
Our faith has yet allowed.
To thrill us and surprise us
With His sovereign power.
Where darkness has been darkest
The brightest light will shine.
His invitation comes to us,
It's yours and it is mine.
*Graham Kendrick
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The River

We have recently returned from a short break in Northumberland near to the river Breamish. The river flows through a landscape of gravel and pebbles with a loosely held together river bank. The river bed itself is meandering and forever changing course. When the river hits an obstacle it either sweeps round it or pushes it aside. There is plenty of visible evidence of changes in direction, oxbow lakes and dry former river bed.

The point is this – that although the course of the river is constantly changing and the water itself is constantly changing, the river is still the river. It struck me as a perfect illustration for the church. The church is always the Church – the body of Christ – His bride, and yet the same church moves and changes and adapts to its setting and circumstances.

I believe that God is calling us to period of prayer and of seeking Him as we look forward to the times ahead. It undoubtedly will (or at least should) look different. Let's not be afraid of this, but rejoice in God's new wine as we hold with outstretched arms the new wineskins.

As the prophet Isaiah says ..

¹⁹ *See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland.
Isaiah 43 v 18-20*

Prayer

Please use the following prayer, or find your own words.

Loving Heavenly Father
You have taught us many things.
Teach us still;
How to live in our communities, to pray and care for one another.
Enlarge our hearts to be more inclusive and less exclusive.
Give us the generous heart that we see in Jesus to consider others before ourselves.
Give us flexible minds to grasp the possibilities you lay before us.
Give us wisdom and grace as we seek to be examples to others.
Make us to shine like stars in the night as we hold out the gospel of truth.

Bless us, we pray, and strengthen us as we face the days ahead.

Through the good times and the difficult times may we live in the assurance that you are Lord of Lords, King of Kings, our Shepherd and our Saviour.

Amen

Final Hymn. There are two Wesley hymns with the same first line. In this case any tune with an 88 88 88 metre should do.

Hymn

What shall I do my God to love,
My Saviour and the worlds to praise,
Whose tenderest compassions move,
To me and all the fallen race,
Whose mercy is divinely free,
For all the fallen race and me.

I long to know, and to make known
The heights and depths of love divine,
The kindness Thou to me hast shown,
Whose every sin was counted thine.
My God for me resigned His breath
He died to save my soul from death.

How shall I thank thee for the grace
On me and all the world bestowed?
O that my every breath were praise!
O that my heart were filled with God!
My heart would then with love o'erflow
And all my life thy glory show.

Charles Wesley

Tune 88 88 88 eg Stella (set tune)

<https://youtu.be/x0H2AgTVtCo>

Or Mozart (tune to Behold the servant of the Lord) <https://youtu.be/630Rvwz5qZY>

May God bless you all.

Graham Pentelow