

Sermon- Quinquagesima 2021 –New Wineskins

The Holy Gospel is written in the 2nd Chapter of Mark, beginning at the 18th verse:

Glory be to thee, O Lord

¹⁸ Now John the Baptist's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came and said to Jesus, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?"

¹⁹ And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. ²⁰ The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.

²¹ No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. ²² And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins- and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins." The Gospel of the Lord

Praise be to thee, O Christ / Praise to you Lord Christ

Opening Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God,
By whose grace thy servants are enabled to fight...
The good fight of faith ...and ever prove victorious;
We humbly beseech thee so to re-new our hearts and minds...
our bodies and our souls
That we may yield our hearts to thine obedience
And exercise our wills on thy behalf.
Help us to think wisely,
To speak rightly,
To act bravely,
To be kindly,
To live purely.
Bless us....
And make us a blessing to others.
May we ever seek the growth of thy kingdom.
And Let the assurance of thy presence
Strengthen us in life
and comfort us in death.
In Jesus name we pray,
Amen

Have you heard these phrases:

“Satisfy your thirst for adventure...good things take time”

Or

“Turning moments into Memories”

Or

OK here is the give away

“We will sell no wine before its time”

These are all wine advertisement jingles

My favorite comes from a winery called Frog’s Leap

It started out as a frog farm

And their jingle

Is a take-off on the phrase

“Time flies when you’re having fun”

At Frogs leap ...it is...

Times fun...when you’re having flies

But how about this one

New wine for new wineskins !

It is of course what Jesus said from our gospel lesson today

In the original Greek ...there is **no** verb

It is a phrase: “New wine for new wineskins”

What intrigues me is that many modern day Greek scholars

Believe that Jesus may have been quoting a wine advertisement

Of his day...

To what purpose ?

That something new and exciting is taking the place of the old

Do you remember the song

“Everything old is new again”

A 1970’s song written Carole Sager and Australian Peter Allen

The last verse:

Don't throw the past away
you might need it some rainy day
Dreams can come true again
When everything old is new again
When everything old i-is new-ew a-again

I think there is great truth in this jingle
There are two different articles that made this point

The first was by Bret Stephens in his column “Global View”
Entitled “Do we still want the West”
It is about the decline of western civilization
In his view...western civilization
As a geopolitical bloc...a cultural expression...a moral ideal...
Is in deep trouble!

Stephens begins by noting the rot
Citing as an example Stanford University ...in the 1980's
It did away with the required Western Civilization Course
With Jesse Jackson leading students in a chant of
Hey hey ho ho, western civ has got to go!
And so it did...in many ways...

But what did we expect...?
If like Stanford ...we no longer teach our children western values?
Then Stephens makes an illuminating point

He writes:

There was a time when the West knew what it was about.

It did so because it thought about itself-

often in Freshman Western Civ classes.

It understood that :

its moral foundations had been laid in Jerusalem,

its philosophical foundations in Athens,

and its legal foundations in Rome.

Stephens says in essence ...

we desperately need to recover our foundations....

because... they are worth defending !

But we have raised a generation to believe none of this
and yet we seem shocked at the rise of anti-western politics!

Our hope is essentially that Everything old-
our foundations in Jerusalem, Athens, and Rome ...
need to be made new again!

Last Sunday we heard the parable of the workers in the vineyard

It is a metaphor of how Jerusalem and Israel had lost their way
and departed from the teachings of God

How Israel and the Temple had turned their backs on God
and substituted their own human standards in place of God's

And Jesus ...does something unexpected...something new

He teaches us that God love us so much

that he gives us chances to change our ways to conform to his will

To start working for God's kingdom
To abide by God's ways- and not the culture's

Is Jesus doing here ...something new?

YES!

With foundations that go back... to creation

Everything old is new again!!!

This is something Jesus has been doing all along

Because everything Jesus does
goes back to our creator Father

And God will for us

This is in fact God's game plan since creation

To get his people back to the Garden of Eden

Where originally there was no sin

How to do that ?

To make a new humanity

A forgiven humanity

He sent us Jesus- the one who can forgive our sins

By taking them on himself

A paying the cost

That is something new ...

That is the good news that Jesus brings to us

Sad to say not everyone believes this

Not in Jesus' time...

the religious leaders and authorities called Pharisees

Consistently rejected both what Jesus was saying AND doing

Not everyone believes Jesus in our time either
The second article I read this week was about Michael Novak
who several years ago
Novak wrote in 1976 the Book “A Closet Capitalist Confesses”
as he turned from socialism to capitalism
In that book he wrote that socialism was the “residue
of the Judeo-Christian faith” without God or Jesus.
Socialism is the “belief in the goodness of the human race
and paradise on earth.”

If this be true...God is unnecessary!

Yet the Prophet Isaiah some 800 years before Jesus
Spoke the word of God...which we read this morning:
*Behold, I am doing a new thing ...now it springs forth...do you not
perceive it ? ...I... **I am** he
who blots out your transgressions for my sake
and I will not remember your sins*

“I... **I am**...

did you get that ?

A reference to the great “I Am” who is The Lord God Almighty
"I am" ...The name Jesus will adopt for himself
An Epiphany!

Which brings us to today’s gospel account
Of the rejection of Jesus as Messiah in Jesus own time

by not just the Jewish religious establishment
but now ...also by local Jews
perhaps including followers of John the Baptist
who demand to know why Jesus and His followers
were not observing Jewish fasts...
as the Pharisees and other devout Jews did

Here we need some background
Moses established only one fast
As God demanded ...
A fast on the annual Day of Atonement

But by the time of Jesus
The Jewish authorities had created multiple fasting times
Including fasting twice a week on Monday and Thursday
But these were essentially man made rules
Rules that certainly demonstrate
a reverence and a piety toward God
YET...Jesus and his disciples did not observe
these twice a week fasts...
Why Not ? ...the people ask Jesus
What does this say about your devotion to God they ask!
It strikes me ...as a very good question!
Jesus' answer ...
Is that God is doing a new thing...in their very midst
Jesus tells them that what God is doing now before their very eyes
Jesus presence ...Is like...is like... a Jewish wedding feast!
This is a picture they would immediately understand

Remember the story of Jesus first miracle at Cana
The wedding banquet was the greatest kind of celebration the
average Jew would ever participate in
They were festive and extravagant affairs
To fast during such a celebration would be unthinkable!
When there is a wedding ...
do the guests have a "fast" ...while the bridegroom is with them?
Of course not! They party! They party hard!
Jesus is clearly describing himself as the bridegroom
And his followers ...the wedding guests
The Old Testament often portrays God's salvation
As a great banquet celebration
Jesus is portraying himself as the host of the banquet
This is the dawning of the kingdom of God!
This is a time of celebration ...not fasting
For God is doing something new in their midst!

But.....says Jesus ...
The time will come ...
when the bridegroom will be taken away from them
Then...then... will be the time of fasting!

But for now rejoice!
Realize ...Jesus tells the people
Something brand new is taking place
The something old is being made new again
But how new?

So new ...that the old is not merely being patched up
the whole thing is being made new

What happens? ...Jesus asks...

If you try to sew a new patch of cloth...onto an old garment

Everyone of course knows

The new ...un-shrunk patch of cloth sewn

onto say... an old coat

the new patch would shrink ...but the rest of the coat would not

So the shrinking patch would the cause the coat to tear

making the situation worse than it was before

Jesus adds one other example about the effect making things new

How about wine? No one puts new wine into old wineskins

Why? Because new wine is still fermenting

And the gas of fermentation would essentially blowup

an already stretched out... old wineskin

The answer is...you need a new skinfor new wine

A new wine skin that can stretch to accommodate the new

Jesus message to the gathered was clear

Jesus is doing something new...

The kingdom of God is at hand

The new wine of the coming kingdom of God

The blood of Jesus which will be poured out to save all humanity

Cannot be poured into the old wineskin...

Jesus is saying the structure of Judaism is an old wineskin

For you see Jesus' mission on earth is not
to patch up Israel's religion ...
it is to inaugurate a new kingdom...a new covenant with God...
a new era of salvation...

A time when everything old as creation ...is made new

Just as God planned it

Just as God promised from the prophets of old

What is new?

We have moved from the age of promise...the Old Testament

To the age of fulfillment....

The New Testament and the arrival of Kingdom of God

being made new ...in Christ

Being made new

Can you make yourself new?

Many certainly try

With makeovers of one type or another

Such new faces... or new bodies ...or new surroundings

Or new spiritualities...new ways of thinking

But our own attempts to really make ourselves new... fail

Because they are too superficial

They are too temporary

They are too fragile

In the end... we are still our same old sinful self

What we need is something that gets at the basic problem

Our sinful selves

Have you ever heard of the "sin eater"

I was not aware of that expression a few years ago
When I came upon an article
In the Notre Dame Magazine...of all things
Called ... "The sin eater"
The author explains that his uncle
Was the black sheep of the family
The uncle had many failed marriages
Had a life - long addiction to whisky
which he drank frequently in copious amounts
often at the most inappropriate times and ways

The uncle had alienated himself from family and friends alike
Only his nephew ...the article writer... stayed in touch
Some when the end came for the uncle
He placed his nephew in charge of the arrangements
So how to handle the funeral
The nephew recalled the old Irish practice of the sin eater
That when a person died in questionable circumstances
A sin eater would be hired
The sin eater would appear at the wake
And eat a chunk of bread and drink the pint of beer
which were placed on the deceased chest
The concept was the sin eater was consuming
the sin of the deceased
So that is what the nephew did for his uncle

I was surprised that the writer didn't make the connection
That there really IS a sin eater

A sin eater that really does consume the sin of not just one person
But of all humanity
Jesus eats up all our sin
And in the process makes us completely new

That is what Paul tells us
Put off... your old self
Put on... the new self
By faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior

The lesson Jesus teaches is that there is no substitute for God
God's way leads to new life
The human way leads to death
New self or Old self ?
New wines skins or old?
Which do you choose?

I say New Wine...for New Wineskins !
And make your old life new
That is the promise Jesus makes