

All Things New

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[0 : 00] This evening's reading can be found on page 974 of the Church Bibles. Begin at verse 14 of chapter 9.

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

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.

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. 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.

[1 : 09] While he was saying this, a synagogue leader came and knelt before him and said, My daughter has just died, but come and put your hand on her, and she will live.

Jesus got up and went with him, and so did his disciples. Just then, a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak.

She said to herself, If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed. Jesus turned and saw her. Take heart, daughter, he said. Your faith has healed you.

And the woman was healed at that moment. When Jesus entered the synagogue leader's house and saw the noisy crowd and people playing pipes, he said, Go away.

The girl is not dead, but asleep. But they laughed at him. After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up.

[2 : 10] News of this spread through all that region. As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, Have mercy on us, son of David.

When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, Do you believe that I am able to do this? Yes, Lord, they replied. Then he touched their eyes and said, According to your faith, let it be done to you.

And their sight was restored. Jesus warned them sternly, See that no one knows about this. But they went out and spread the news about him all over that region.

While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.

But the Pharisees said, It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons. Well, good evening, and let me add my welcome to Darren's.

[3 : 24] My name's Jamie. I'm a ministry trainee here at St. Silas. And if we haven't met yet, I'd love to get to know you after the service. It'd be very useful if you could keep your Bibles open at page 974, as we get stuck into this passage.

Well, I don't know what you were up to last night, but between 24 minutes past nine and 26 minutes past nine, I thought I was witnessing a resurrection. 31-0, no longer.

14 points up. We, the Scottish rugby team, had a chance, a slim one, but my hopes were up. Could this be it? Our chances of a quarterfinal war being revived from the ashes.

Was there going to be a resurrection? Well, as any of you who watch the match know, there was not. But what do you make of resurrection?

Real resurrection. Life from death. Death. Throughout Matthew's gospel, we have been seeing what it means that the kingdom of God is near and who it is that shall be brought into the kingdom.

[4 : 31] And tonight, we see that Jesus is the great restorer and resurrector. Our broken world is not how it was meant to be, and Jesus' kingdom is the new world that we all long for.

In his life and ministry, Jesus gives us just a glimpse of the new reality that he is bringing. It's astonishing, and I hope you will be encouraged and comforted at seeing the new things that Jesus brings.

Let me pray as we get into the passage. Heavenly Father, we ask that tonight we would see the Lord Jesus. We ask that as we spend time looking at the life of Jesus, that we would see who he is and how glorious it is when he is king.

Let us desire to know Jesus better, and may my words be glorifying to you now as they speak of Jesus. Amen. Well, our first point this evening is that Jesus is the new wine.

Tonight, as last week, Jesus is asked a question about his behavior. Last week, we saw why Jesus is feasting with sinners, even those who collaborate with the oppressive Roman authorities.

[5 : 48] Tonight, the question he is asked is not so much about the company at the meal, but why is Jesus having a feast at all? You see, the Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day, had seen the disastrous consequences brought about by the misbehavior of their ancestors.

And as a result, the Pharisees went over and above to obey God, or at least so they thought. And so since fasting is a good thing, and it shows a reliance on God, they added multiple fasts into their calendars.

John the Baptist followers, too, know that fasting is a good thing. John himself clearly fasted, and so even now, after he's been put in prison, his followers continue with fasting.

But they've missed something big. Jesus is not John. John was only preparing the way for Jesus. Now, Jesus answers their question shockingly.

He says that fasting is for times of mourning. See in verse 15 how he answers, how can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them?

[6 : 59] Jesus says that this is not the time for mourning, and therefore is not the time for fasting. Why then is this not a time for mourning?

It's because this is a time of celebration. Jesus uses the imagery of a wedding. It would be wrong for guests at a wedding to not celebrate the groom while in his company.

I mean, just picture it. Everyone around you is celebrating and feasting, but you're sitting in the corner with an empty plate, making sure that everyone knows and sees as you flash your self-righteousness in their faces.

I mean, it's an act of arrogance. It's disrespectful to the bride and groom. They have invited you to join their celebrations. So no, Jesus' disciples don't fast, but they celebrate at his being with them.

But the Pharisees would be well aware that this bridegroom imagery is more than a throwaway image. As Matthew is certainly calling to mind that Jesus is declaring himself to be the bridegroom.

[8 : 06] Throughout the Old Testament, God is pictured as a husband with his people being his bride. Hosea the prophet goes into great depth on this image, and in particular, how Israel has been an unfaithful wife.

How when the people worship Baal and other vile gods, they commit adultery against the one true God, the Lord. And so in order for the union to be restored, God himself must pay the great cost needed to win her back.

In chapter 2 of Hosea, we read this declaration from the Lord. Therefore, I am now going to allure her. I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her.

In that day, declares the Lord, you will call me my husband. You will no longer call me my master. I will betroth to you for me, betroth you to me forever.

I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the Lord. By declaring himself to be the bridegroom, Jesus is claiming that he is God.

[9 : 20] Come to restore the marriage with his unfaithful wife. He claims to be the restorer. He claims to be the husband. And if this is the case, then this is indeed a time of great celebration.

If Jesus really is God himself, come to restore his people, then this moment, more than any other, is a time for feasting, not for fasting. But we see that the great cost of winning back unfaithful Israel shall lead to a time of fasting.

Jesus says he will be taken from them. This first hint towards Jesus' death in Matthew's gospel shouldn't be missed. He will be taken from them, and on that day, mourning and fasting will be right.

When Jesus dies in shame and agony, then his followers do indeed mourn. They fast and weep at the great bridegroom upon a cross.

Well, it's tricky to know exactly how this applies to us. Should we fast or feast? Well, I think it has to be both. Jesus has risen from the dead, and the Spirit is always with us, so it is a time to celebrate.

[10 : 36] But he's also not physically present now, and this is a time of waiting for him to come again. The pastor, Richard Pratt, puts it like this.

Christians who are gloomy all the time have forgotten what Christ has already done, and those who are happy all the time have forgotten what he has yet to do.

So we feast and we fast until the day when Jesus makes all things new. So then what's up with verses 16 and 17? Why does Jesus respond to a question about fasting with cloths and wineskins?

The Pharisees and John's disciples represent a sort of reformed Judaism. They fast more than their ancestors. That's the way they aim to live for God.

But Jesus is clarifying here that the Reformation needed for God's people isn't more pious and religious deeds. It's himself, the new wine.

[11 : 38] And so that's the metaphor with the clothes and wineskins. The new thing isn't compatible with the old. A new piece of cloth will shrivel up over time and will ruin any new cloth used for an attempted repair.

Similarly, new wine, which is still fermenting, will create too much pressure in old, leathery wineskins. The old is the Pharisees and they are all about outward religiosity.

They perform hundreds and thousands of rituals and sacrifices to prove that they are clean and holy. And so the Messiah that they are expecting is put into a pretty narrow box.

They expect the most religious man ever. He is shiny in his holiness. He certainly fasts, as do his followers. And he keeps a million miles from anything unclean.

And he triumphantly defeats his enemies with a Roman or foreigner, tax collector or sinner. But Jesus is so, so much more than that. He is the new wine.

[12 : 46] He is the promised Messiah. He does fulfill the law, but my goodness is his kingdom better than just an earthly land with no more Romans or tax collectors. Jesus fulfills the law.

He keeps it perfectly. He is utterly holy. But he doesn't run from the dirty. No, he comes and makes it clean. They were expecting a king who rewarded the outwardly holy.

But instead, Jesus came to bring inward transformation. He is the new wine, and he's doing new things. He's reversing our brokenness and restoring us.

What follows in the next scene is two overlapping stories. Both involve a hopeless situation into which Jesus brings new life.

And this is our second point, new life. As we read, let's see just how despairing it is. Look with me at verse 18.

[13 : 50] We have a synagogue leader, a well-respected man in the community, a man who has much control over his life, a man who is close to God, but here he's helpless.

His daughter has just died. His child taken from him. Death, I mean, is awful. There is no greater pain.

And here is just a little girl, his little girl, dead. And yet, see his hope, his faith.

He kneels before Jesus, a sign of respect, especially from this well-respected man. And this ludicrous request, is he really trusting that Jesus can restore even life from death?

I also wonder how the disciples are feeling in verse 19. I mean, they've already seen amazing things. They've heard amazing things, but they've never seen resurrection.

[14 : 51] I mean, no one has. And so, they're walking back to the family's house, but as they walk, we meet another who is needing new life.

A woman who has been subject to bleeding for 12 years. This is probably bleeding from the womb, but regardless of the exact diagnosis, blood makes someone unclean under the Levitical law.

Uncleanliness is utterly serious under the Old Covenant. No one unclean can come into the temple courts. They cannot worship God, and for all intents and purposes, they are cut off from him.

In fact, they're cut off from the people too. Uncleanliness spreads. It's contagious. If this woman touched you, if she sat on a chair which you then sat on, if she touched your clothes, then you would become unclean.

You would avoid her at all costs. And yet, if you somehow did catch her uncleanliness, it's still not that bad for you. I mean, there would be a period of ritual cleansing, but afterwards, you could be readmitted into the community, readmitted into the temple.

[16 : 01] Not so for her. Because she's still bleeding. For 12 years, she has been bleeding, and for 12 years, she has been a shameful outcast.

It's doubtful that she had any human contact, and certainly was unmarried and unwelcome at any social or religious occasions. She could even be homeless.

One thing is for certain, she's desperate. And yet, we see something remarkable. She, like the father of the dead girl, has faith.

She trusts in Jesus' ability to heal her to the point that she reaches out and touches him. What a scandal! She's unclean, and she's going to make Jesus unclean.

But that's not what happens. Look at verse 22. Jesus turned and saw her. Jesus has been doing a lot of seeing in these chapters.

[16 : 59] He sees into the depths of our hearts. He knows us intimately and deeply, and knows our needs. And as he sees, what does he say?

Take heart, daughter. Your faith has healed you. In empathy, in compassion and mercy, Jesus tenderly declares this woman a daughter and declares her clean.

Take heart, he says. Know completely and utterly that there is reason for joy in your heart. Take heart. Know that Jesus is the merciful Messiah and that he brings new life.

Have courage, because his kingdom will right every wrong and restore everything. Know that you are healed. Take heart. And as this restoration brings people into the kingdom, it breaks down the barriers that are keeping people out.

Instead of the unclean woman making the clean Jesus unclean, we have that the perfectly clean and holy Jesus makes the unclean woman clean.

[18 : 07] It's Jesus' cleanliness that's contagious. This woman hasn't touched anyone in over a decade, yet here, Jesus accepts her reaching out to him.

She touches his cloak and is healed. See how the simple act of faith completely transforms her life. It gives her back her life.

For all we know, this bleeding might have started at puberty. For her entire adult life, she hasn't known a life of acceptance and being clean. And now in faith, she has reached out and taken what Jesus offers.

New life. That's how it works. Faith that Jesus is the promised king, that he is the Messiah who shall make all things new brings hope.

This message is for everyone, even us here tonight. Take heart, Jesus says. Have faith in him and enter his kingdom, for there, healing, restoration, salvation is found.

[19 : 17] But amidst all this, what about the dead girl? Well, we continue from verse 23. We're back at the father's house. But here we see a culture unlike ours.

Our funerals tend to be quiet and somber. But not so in the first century Middle East. The louder the commotion, the greater the grief. And a treasure's daughter is dead.

So a great crowd are mourning together. Yet Jesus once again shocks the onlookers. The girl is not dead but asleep, he says in verse 24.

Is this an unsympathetic comment or is the unthinkable really possible? Could it be that even death can be undone by Jesus?

Could it be that when Jesus is king, that life reigns and not death, that even this can be reversed? And so we see Jesus take hold of the girl's hand, another intimate and beautiful act.

[20 : 18] He again touches something ritually unclean, but as he lifts her up, he lifts her to life. We have compassion in action here, willing to go past the uncleanness because his holiness is so ferocious.

It makes, nothing can make him unclean. His light shines so brightly, no darkness can ever overcome it. What's your reaction to this news?

Do you see who Jesus is? If Jesus offers life when there is death, does that change anything in your life? Globally, we spend over 120 billion pounds a week on healthcare.

And this is rightly so. The preservation of life should always be of that most importance. But what if Jesus can go beyond what our healthcare ever will?

What if death wasn't something to be afraid of? Do you think you're going to die one day? Well, of course you do. Everyone knows that everybody dies.

[21 : 25] But if Jesus has the authority, the power and ability to grant life from death, then we, like the father of this girl, like the formerly bleeding woman, need to trust him, put our faith in him, for new life is found in Jesus.

Well, we see in verse 26 that news is spreading far and wide. But recall that the crowds have been put outside. So I wonder what they think. What is this news that's spreading?

Can people really see what's happening here? Do they see who Jesus is? Well, this brings us to our final point. Jesus brings new sight. Our passage tonight began with the religious elites failing to grasp who Jesus is.

Despite their religiosity, they don't know what Jesus' kingdom is like. We see real spiritual blindness in them. Then verse 27.

Well, it's almost ironic. We have two men who see exactly who Jesus is and yet they're physically blind. Have mercy on us, son of David, they cry out.

[22 : 38] They know precisely who Jesus is. You see, David is the great king of Israel's history. And God promises that, he promises David that his house, his dynasty, shall rule forever.

By calling Jesus the son of David, they are saying that he is the promised king. That he is the one who shall reign forever. These blind men see that Jesus is the Messiah.

He's the one who brings the promised kingdom, the one who rules with mercy. And as they see that Jesus is the great Davidic king, they trust that Jesus can restore them.

They believe Jesus can give them sight and so he grants them it. He welcomes them in and makes them see. Again, we have the touching of their eyes.

Again, an intimate and personal display of his compassion. Though he has power to heal at a distance, Jesus goes right to them and meets them in their need right where they are.

[23 : 43] They bring nothing to him. Only faith that he can do all things. And so in his mercy, Jesus grants their request. We then have another dramatic healing in verse 32.

A demon-possessed man who cannot speak is healed. The demon is gone and he can now speak. Jesus must be the promised king. He heals and restores all that is wrong and drives out evil in the process.

But after all of this, who is it that can really see? Well, on one hand, we have the crowd. Look with me at verse 33. Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel, they say.

Jesus is doing something supernatural. Jesus is bringing the kingdom and it's bigger and better than anyone could have hoped. Israel has seen some incredible miracles in its time, but with Jesus, God is doing something never seen before.

With Jesus' miracles here, we see a glimpse of the kingdom that he shall one day bring in full. The Pharisees, on the other hand, well, they don't like what they see.

[24 : 55] They do agree that it's supernatural. I mean, they can't deny what's in front of them, but they don't see. Instead of seeing that Jesus is exactly who they've been waiting for, they utter evil upon their lips.

They claim that Jesus, the righteous one, is the prince of demons. This abomination of a statement could not be further from the truth and only demonstrates true blindness.

They don't see that the law they tried to follow so closely was always pointing to Jesus. They are the old wine and they are incompatible and are useless at accepting the new wine that is Jesus.

They need new sight. They need to see that Jesus is the very one they've been waiting for, the king who's bringing his kingdom and bringing many people with him.

They, like the blind men, only need to ask Jesus to give them new sight. And that's what we need to ask too. Because Jesus doesn't leave us fumbling in the dark trying to figure out the big questions of life, the universe, and everything.

[26 : 09] He gives people new sight so that they can see who he is. Once your eyes are open to see who Jesus is, you can see everything clearly.

Look at these scenes. Jesus is inviting you. You are welcome to ask him for sight. To ask for a newly restored life. Well, as I say this, some of you are wondering whether this new life is really open to all.

But let me tell you that Matthew's gospel ends with even more dramatic scenes than the ones here. Jesus himself is brutally executed by crucifixion, but on the Sunday morning he rises again.

The promise of new life from Jesus is proven beyond doubt by his own resurrection. Jesus has conquered death and now he offers life.

Jesus is bringing complete restoration. So come to him, the new wine. Come to the promised king who rose again, the king who's bringing his kingdom, and by faith take heart knowing the new life he gives you, the new sight that can be yours.

[27 : 28] Let us pray. Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus Christ, we do praise you for the new world that you are bringing with your kingdom.

Lord, we praise you, Jesus, that you are the new wine and we praise you that you bring new life and new sight. So Lord, we ask that you help us to know this, to know you, to see you and to take the life that you offer.

We pray these things in Jesus' precious name. Amen. Amen.