



“Out with the Old, In with the New”  
Luke 5:33-39

**Idea:** Jesus ushered in the Kingdom of God, and with it He brought a fountain of joy not found in religion.

**Intro:** *You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.* – Psalm 16:11

Today, like every Sunday, we declare our joy in the Lord. There is joy in the house of the Lord. This joy is different than happiness. It is not an external feeling based on favorable conditions. No, it is seated in something much more secure than environments. According to William Barclay “joy has nothing to do with material things or with a man’s outward circumstances.” Instead, it is the gift of God, given to the believer as an aspect of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). Jesus said, *“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full”* (John 15:11). The Lord makes it clear that He is our joy.

Therefore, as William Vander Hoven said, “Life need not be easy to be joyful. Joy is not the absence of trouble but the presence of Christ.” Today, it does not matter what you may be facing. You can be on top of the mountain, down in the valley, or somewhere in between yet be full of joy. You may wonder how this possible. It is possible because Jesus is your joy. His presence brings joy. For this reason, C. S. Lewis wrote, “Joy is the serious business of heaven.” When Jesus takes up residence in a person’s life, joy fills that house.

Tragically, the sinful, fleshly nature of the human heart seeks to keep Jesus off the throne. It sets up religious forms and paradigms to mimic what only Jesus can offer, which leave the person empty, self-righteous, and joyless. This religious condition of the human heart is on full display in the Pharisees and scribes found in Luke 5. As we finish this chapter, we will discover another aspect to this dichotomy Luke has been contrasting between Jesus and the religious elite. Jesus ushered in the Kingdom of God, and with it He brought a fountain of joy not found in religion.

Read Luke 5:33-39.

**Inquiry:** The Pharisees and scribes struggled to understand Jesus. They could not fit His teaching within their paradigm. Their questioning of Jesus in this passage reveals this misunderstanding. These men wondered how Jesus and His disciples could follow God when they did not do all the religious things they and others perceived to be of utmost importance. As we contemplate what is taking place in this passage, we are confronted with a reality. The way in which we follow Jesus depends on what we know about Him.

The Pharisees and scribes represent you and me. God has created us as worshipers. We were created to worship God. Sin has broken God’s design and left humanity in a state of rebellion. Rather than desiring to

worship the Creator, man seeks to worship the created. Religious forms and paradigms are constructed and reconstructed to give the appearance of spiritual health and vitality. They are set up to make one right with God. Such was the case with the Jewish religion during the days of the Pharisees. Unfortunately, Judaism like every other religion morphed into a vain attempt at self-righteousness. The Pharisees believed that through their keeping of the Mosaic Law they could be right with God. To perfectly keep the law, they added laws to what God had given through Moses. Surely, laws layered on top of laws would keep them from breaking a commandment. Rather than their religiosity bringing them closer to God, it left them crusty and joyless. Into this lifeless religion, Jesus offered and emphasized a better option. It is out with the old and in with the new. Let's work through this confrontation together and see the superiority of relationship over religion.

### **1. A religious question. (vs. 33)**

The conversation from Levi's dinner party continued. The religious elite still believed Jesus' attendance scandalized religion. They could not believe He would eat and drink with "sinners." Their comment showed them to be religious ascetics. They believed that to be right with God, one must avoid all forms of pleasure. Their comment also assumes a question. The Pharisees, scribes, and even John's disciples fast and pray, so why do Jesus and His disciples not do the same? The ascetic believes that abstinence makes one godlier and pleasing to God. They called for fasting and prayer.

Fasting and prayer were conventional practices in the Old Testament. Fasting was, however, only commanded once a year on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:24-31). These are healthy and profitable spiritual disciplines. They can also be abused by asceticism. By Jesus' time the Pharisees had decreed that godly people fast twice a week (on Mondays and Thursdays). For them fasting meant mourning. They sought to gain God's attention by offering their own mournful flesh to God. The effect of this was to view true religion as solemn, joyless, and gloomy. In their minds, one could not be spiritual unless you were uncomfortable. Spirituality consisted of doing things you did not want to do while refraining from doing the things you wanted to do.

Too often, even in our own day, Christians can fall into the ascetic trap and view worship through a gloomy lens. Erma Bombeck wrote that "some people come to church looking like they have just read the will of their rich aunt only to learn that she left everything to her pet hamster." The Pharisees could not understand Jesus' walk with God. We, too, fail to grasp the model He presented. In response to their religious question Jesus offered...

### **2. A relational answer. (vs. 34-35)**

The Lord answered with a wedding analogy. Ancient Jewish weddings had four phases. The first phase was the contract. The parents of the bride and groom agreed to their children's marriage and a bride price was given to the father of the bride. This contract effectively began the marriage even though the couple did not live together as husband and wife. The second phase consisted of an indefinite period in which the groom returned to his father's house to prepare a place for he and his bride. While the preparation was taking place, the bride watched for his return and prepared for the marriage that could take place at any time. Only when the preparations had been finished and the father had given permission would the groom return for his bride. The third phase was marked by celebration when the groom returned. This often lasted for seven days with dancing, music, food, and drink. The final phase came after the celebration as the marriage was consummated and the bride and groom lived together and built a family.

Jesus' answer to the religious question clearly recalls the celebration that takes place during a wedding. It is a time of joy and indulgence rather than gloom and denial. It is ludicrous to think about fasting during the wedding meal. It is not a time to be stoic. Quite the opposite! It is a time of rejoicing and thanksgiving. The point Jesus was making was that He is the bridegroom. This was a time for

celebration and joy. He asserted that His presence justified a feast, and that His followers had the joyous privilege of a perpetual wedding party. There would come a day when He would be taken up from them, but this day was not that day.

The relational answer Jesus offers to the Pharisees religious question made clear that being in the presence of Jesus brings relentless joy. Their old perspective on walking with God needed a fresh update, and their understanding of who He was needed clarity. To help the religious people better understand, Jesus offered...

### **3. A relatable example. (vs. 36-38)**

Jesus compares the situation to a new garment and new wine. He is making the point that a new era has arrived.

Imagine coming home after a full day of shopping. You have been to your favorite clothing stores and found the perfect new outfit for a special occasion. Jesus points out that no one would bring home a new shirt only to cut it up in pieces to patch up an old, ragged shirt. The reasons why you would not do so is twofold. First, you would ruin the new shirt by cutting it up. Second, the new shirt would not match the old shirt.

Judaism, as good as it was, had become an old, worn-out garment. It could not be patched with a few things taken from the gospel. The new covenant replaces the old covenant. The gospel of the new covenant is too dynamic for the old structures.

Jesus further sealed His point with an even more vivid illustration. In ancient cultures, the skins of goats were tanned and fashioned into bags that held new wine. The natural elasticity and strength of the new goat skin would allow the fermenting new wine to expand. However, if new wine was put into old wineskins, their brittle, inflexible condition would cause them to burst, and both would be lost. The Lord's point was that He produces an expanding joy in the hearts of His followers. The new wine of life cannot be restrained by old, unyielding structures.

R. Kent Hughes shares a story from the life of Donald Grey Barnhouse that illustrates this new life. After the Armistice of World War I, Barnhouse used to visit the battlefields of Belgium. In the first year of the war, the area around the city of Mons had been the scene of a great British retreat. In the last year of the war, it was the scene of a great German retreat. For miles to the west of the city, the roads were littered with abandoned artillery, tanks, trucks, and equipment.

On a lovely spring day after that German retreat, the sun was shining, and the air was calm and still. As Barnhouse walked around the road examining the abandoned equipment, he noticed that leaves were falling from the great trees arching above the road. He caught one of the falling leaves and pressed it in his fingers. It immediately crumpled up into dust. He was dumbfounded by falling leaves in the spring with no wind. Then, he realized that the most potent force of all was causing them to fall. It was spring. The sap was beginning to run up the trunks of the trees. Buds were forming from within. From down beneath the dark earth, roots were sending life along trunk, branch, and twig until that life expelled every bit of deadness that remained from the previous year.

Through the example of new wine, Jesus was showing that when He fills our lives, the swelling life within expands us beyond our imagination. This new inner life expels unneeded qualities and fills every aspect of life. Once Christ takes up residence in our lives, every aspect of our being (intellect, emotions, & will) undergoes change.

Lastly, Jesus shared a...

#### 4. A regrettable sentiment. (vs. 39)

The proverb in this verse reveals a travesty that happens too often. Many people who have not tasted the new are determined never to try it because what they have is good enough for them. They imagine that Jesus cannot offer them anything better, so they never even taste the new for the sake of comparison.

This arrogance, stubbornness, and folly was the sentiment of the Pharisees and scribes who questioned Jesus. He was making clear to them that in His presence is boundless joy. In His presence there is forgiveness of sin and life transformation. In Him they could find something far superior to what they found in their religious activity.

#### 3 Applications:

- Religion is the natural activity of people.  
“From Romans 1 to 3, we learn that mankind knows something of the true God but turns instead to elaborate substitutes...Far from a quest for God, human religion is an evasion of Him.” – Stephen Board

The Bible reveals that humanity was created by God and for God. We were created to be in relationship with Him. We were created to worship and bring glory to His name. Sin, obviously, broke that aspect of our creation, but it did not eliminate it. Men, women, boys, and girls have an innate desire to worship. We will and do worship something all the time. Therefore, religion is the natural activity of people.

- Religion is not sufficient in and of itself.  
Humanity was not created simply to worship anything. We were created by God and for God...created to worship Him alone. Along with this reality, we must acknowledge that the outward expression of religious activity does not affect the inward parts of a person. It does not touch the heart and soul. It may make a person's actions appear different, but it cannot change the heart.

It has been said, “If your religion has not changed you, then you had better change your religion.” The truth is we do not need more religion, we need a relationship.

- Religion must be replaced with relationship.  
In Luke 5, Jesus called the fishermen, the leper, the paralytic, Levi, and the Pharisees to Himself. He invited all of them into relationship. He did not call for more religious activity. He did not say to them, “Go, and do more religious things in order to be approved by God.” No, He said, “Come and follow Me.”

**Conclusion:** In every situation, the ones who decided to come into relationship with Jesus and follow Him experienced immeasurable joy. I can see Simon and Andrew putting down their nets and walking away from their boats to follow Jesus with a joy in their hearts they had never known before. The leper is ecstatic! Jesus healed his body. He has been forever changed. The same is true of both the paralytic and Levi. They both in their joy glorify God. The only ones in the entire chapter who do not experience the joy of the Lord are the religious elite. They refuse to throw out the old and take up the new. They cannot see past their religion and tradition.

The Pharisees failed to come into relationship and follow Jesus because they misunderstood who He was and what He came to do. Therefore, let's not forget that the way in which we follow Jesus depends on what we know about Him. Jesus is God the Son, and He came to set you and I free from the bondage of sin. He came to seek and save the lost. He came as a fulfillment of the old covenant and to usher in the new covenant. This is wonderful news!!

Good news: God loves you. He created you and desires to know you.

Bad news: You are a sinner in rebellion against your Creator.

Best news: God has done everything necessary to justly deal with your sin and bring forgiveness and restoration to your life. Today, He calls you to turn from your sin and self and turn to Him as Savior and Lord. Do you need to be forgiven? Maybe you feel like an outcast or that you have sinned beyond the scope of forgiveness. Levi's story makes it clear that Jesus' reach is wide.

Jesus knows everything about you. He has assessed your life and knows your sin. In the face of your sin, He has also issued a call. Will you today decide to follow Him?