

The Festival of Following Jesus

Thomas Robinson, *Learning at Jesus' Side*, 5, June 24, 2012

Matthew 9:10-17

Jesus Dines with Matthew and other Tax Collectors and Sinners

¹⁰ And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, **many tax collectors and sinners** came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹ And when the **Pharisees** saw this, they said to his disciples, “*Why does your teacher **eat with tax collectors and sinners?***”

¹² But when he heard it, he said, “*Those who are well have no need of a **physician**, but those who are sick.* ¹³ **Go and learn** what this means,

‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ [Hosea 6:6; Mt 12:7]
For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Inquiry about Fasting: Bridegrooms, Shrinking Patches, New Wine

¹⁴ Then the **disciples of John** came to him, saying, “*Why do we and the **Pharisees** fast, but your disciples do not fast?*”

¹⁵ And Jesus said to them, “*Can the **wedding guests** (sons of the bridal chamber) mourn as long as **the bridegroom is with them?** The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.*

¹⁶ *No one puts a piece of **unshrunk cloth** on an old garment, for the patch (it’s fullness) tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made.*

¹⁷ *Neither is **new wine** put into **old wineskins**. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But **new wine is put into fresh wineskins**, and so both are preserved.”*

Hosea 2:16a, 19-20 ¹⁶ “And in that day, declares **the LORD**, you will call me ‘**My Husband**’

¹⁹ And **I will betroth you to me forever**. I will betroth you to me in **righteousness** and in **justice**, in **steadfast love** and in **mercy**. ²⁰ I will betroth you to me in **faithfulness**. And you shall **know the LORD**.”

Matthew 6:16-18 ¹⁶ “*And when you fast, do not **look gloomy** like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.*

¹⁷ *But when you fast, **anoint your head and wash your face**, ¹⁸ that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”*

Matthew 8:11 ¹¹ “*I tell you, **many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven***”

Matthew 11:2-6 ² Now when **John heard in prison** about the **deeds of the Christ**, he sent word by his **disciples** ³ and said to him, “*Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?*”

⁴ And Jesus answered them, “*Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵ the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. ⁶ And **blessed is the one who is not offended by me.***”

Matthew 11:18-19 ¹⁸ “*For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘**He has a demon.**’ ¹⁹ The **Son of Man** came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.”*

Matthew 22:1-2 ¹ And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, ² “*The **kingdom of heaven** may be compared to a **king who gave a wedding feast for his son***” (Also Matthew 25:1-13)

It's Hard to Argue with a Healing, But ...

Matthew wants us to see what is happening in Jesus' ministry; his authority; who he is:

Teaching, Calling, Healing. Remember the paralyzed man (9:2): "Your sins are forgiven." "Rise and walk." The physical healing is a sign of a far deeper, greater reality – healing the sin, alienation from God that plagues humanity. Next, Jesus calls a tax collector and is surrounded by "tax collectors and sinners." Forgiving one man was challenging enough....

Jesus' actions are teaching as much as his words – a discordant, disrupting message to the reforming Pharisees. (Just what we don't need: talking holiness but eating with sinners.)

It will get worse. Matthew is just the tip of the iceberg, a pointer of Jesus' direction. People will come from east and west (8:11). Ultimately even Gentile sinners will be called & included.

To Jesus, this is not new but old: seeing again who God is (Hos 6:6). Jesus came to call people to God – not the righteous but sinners. He excludes no one, but he lets you exclude yourself.

Just One Little Question about Fasting

John, who baptized Jesus, was arrested by Herod Antipas (4:12). His disciples were Jesus' natural allies. But they notice a disturbing pattern in Jesus' actions (with his disciples).

They practice regular fasting while Jesus never seems to call his disciples to fast, just the opposite. They know it's significant because fasting means something: They grieve for Israel's situation of oppression and disobedience and apostasy of aristocratic priests. They long for its purification, renewal. John's imprisonment is a sign of their plight. Thus fasting.

Jesus might have said many things about fasting (6:16-18), but his answer (strange to us) goes to the heart of their concern: Why isn't Jesus mourning Israel's plight like they are?

The Arrival of the Bridegroom

A new time has arrived, Jesus says. God had called himself the Bridegroom/husband of his people repeatedly in scripture – in judgment (Jer. 2); in hope / promise (Isa 54:5-6; Hos 2).

The Bridegroom has arrived! God has come in deliverance for all sinners in Jesus' ministry.

It's time for feasting, celebration. It's the beginning of fulfillment, renewal now. We're no longer mourning losses, awaiting good news. The good news has arrived. The kingdom of God.

The wedding banquet was a great symbol of that kingdom breaking in (22:1-14; 25:1-13).

John's disciples went back to him. He sent a further question (11:2-6). Jesus did the "deeds of the Messiah" and showed that he was "the one who is to come." Some were offended at the vision of God's purposes embodied in Jesus actions (11:18-19). Ultimately the offense brought death.

Shrinking Patch, Fermenting Wine

Jesus adds two brief images/parables to his explanation. He trusts us hearers to understand their meaning. They seem clearly to contrast new and old. The unshrunk patch on the old garment/cloak. New wine, old wineskins. The new proclamation of the kingdom and the old practices of John's disciples and Pharisees. Good. But the kingdom was also old, original.

Perhaps more to the point is the fact that the patch and new wine are changing, reshaping the things around them. The patch of newly woven cloth shrinks and pulls apart the old cloth.

The new wine ferments as it becomes itself and bursts the old, hardened wineskins. In Jesus God is doing a new thing. Jesus is preparing people (Peter, Matthew, centurion, sinners) to be ready for new, yet unimaginable things – cross, resurrection, Holy Spirit, all nations, all authority. This living, powerful, life-changing news must take its own expanding shape.

It has no limits – all authority in heaven and earth; you shall be perfect as your Father is.