*Chapter 2*

# Joy

*The Parable of the Old and New*
*{Luke 5:33 - 39}*
*Bill Bagents*

**One Main Thing**

*Life with Jesus brings a new joy and a fresh perspective.*

**Introduction**

In addition to Luke 5:33–39, The Parable of the Old and New can also be read from Matthew 9:14–17 and Mark 2:16–22. While reading each account is wise, there is also wisdom in hearing Luke's account within its context.

The Parable of the Old and New came as Jesus responded to a series of questions—really criticisms and attacks—from the scribes and Pharisees, religious leaders of His day. The series of conflicts began in Luke 4:16–30 as Jesus read from Isaiah 61:1–2 declaring, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." Though the hearers

"marveled at the gracious words" of Jesus, they took offense at the teaching that followed. That teaching was deemed too gracious toward Gentiles and too challenging toward the chosen nation. The anger of the crowd was so strong that they attempted to throw Jesus over a cliff. What a situation! Astonishment at a new presentation of God's grace was followed by murderous anger.

Conflict escalated in Luke 5:17–26 as Jesus healed a paralyzed man who was brought to Him by friends. The "problem" was not the healing; rather it was the manner of the healing. "When He saw their faith, He said to him, 'Man, your sins are forgiven you'" (Luke 5:20). While the healed man and the crowd glorified God and the witnesses were amazed and filled with fear, the scribes and Pharisees had a different reaction. Since only God can forgive sins and they did not see Jesus as the Son of God, they accused the Lord of blasphemy.

Additional conflict comes in Luke 5:27–32 as Jesus calls Levi, a tax collector, to follow Him. Not only that, Jesus ate and drank "with tax collectors and sinners." He treated outcasts as if they mattered. He announced, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Given that context and the accusations that follow

in Luke 6:2 and 7, we are hard pressed to view the question of Luke 5:33 as either innocent or information-seeking. "They"—the scribes and Pharisees—want Jesus to explain the conduct of His disciples. "Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise those of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink?"

As He often did, Jesus began His response to their question with a question of His own. "Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast when the bridegroom is with them?" (Luke 5:34). He presents His earthly ministry as a time of joy and celebration for His disciples.

**Setting**

It is commonly believed that putting fresh grape juice into old wineskins would lead to breakage as any degree of fermentation or expansion would not be tolerated by the somewhat dried and inflexible containers.

Concerning the question about fasting, numerous biblical texts support the implication of Luke 5:33 that fasting was commonly practiced during the first century. Jesus fasted before His temptation (Luke 4:1–2). He instructed His disciples to avoid abuses of fasting (Matt 6:16–18). The New

Testament includes examples of fasting by Jews (Luke 2:37), Gentiles (Acts 10:30), and Christians (Acts 14:23). Fasting is often linked to prayer (Ps 35:1; Matt 12:21; Acts 13:3; 1 Cor 7:5).

**Interpretation**

The Gospel of Luke begins with a series of joy stories. There is joy for Zacharias and Elizabeth as the angel announces that they will have a son in their old age. There is joy for Mary, "highly favored" by God and "blessed among women," as she will give birth to the Messiah (1:22). Elizabeth's baby jumped for joy when Mary greeted her relative (1:44), and Luke documents the joy of the neighbors (1:58). The angel delivered "good tidings of great joy" to shepherds in the field (2:10). Aged Simeon and Anna found great joy in seeing the Messiah (2:25–29).

Joy in the presence of the Savior is one major reason that the disciples of Jesus did not fast like the disciples of John and of the Pharisees. Though Jesus was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isa 53:3) and He predicted His rejection before it came (Luke 4:23–24), He supported the joy that the disciples found in His person and His mission. He did not ask His disciples to conform to the behavioral traditions of the religious world

around them.

The key reason for joy emphasized by this parable is the new age—the new life—being ushered in through the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. To speak metaphorically, "There's a new sheriff in town, and He is like nothing ever seen before." More accurately, there was a new King in the world. His disciples realize something of this great truth, and that realization has changed their lives. The arrival of the Christ stirs their hearts to joy and celebration. There will be times of sorrow and mourning, but that time is not now.

The arrival and ministry of the Savior did not call for the tweaking or even the reformation of the status quo. It called for joy in the presence of the Savior and in the new life He offered.

What was and continues to be stunningly new about Jesus coming into this world?

- Joy (Luke 2:10–11). Joy within His very name: "And they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, "God with us" (Isa 7:14; Matt 1:23).
- Hope (1 John 3:1–4; Heb 6:13–20)
- Salvation (Luke 2:11; John 1:29; Acts 4:12)

- Peace (Luke 2:14; John 14:27)
- Reconciliation (Rom 5:1–11)
- Incredible promises (2 Pet 1:2–4; John 14:1–6)
- Unity (John 17:20-26; 1 Cor 12)
- Assurance (Rom 8)

Even before His public ministry, we read the following foreshadowing statements from Luke:

- "…Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people"(2:10).
- "For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel" (2:30–32).

Citing the widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian as examples, Jesus reminded His fellow Jews that God loves people in every nation (Luke 4:23–27). The earthly ministry of Jesus focused on the Jews, but we get frequent reminders that God's plan was to open the door of salvation to all—Jew and Gentile alike. Matthew 28:18–20, Mark 16:15–16, and Acts 1:8 speak to this truth

that would necessitate a new covenant between God and man. In God's time and way, the Israel of God would come to include "in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness..." (Acts 10:34–35; 11:18; 13:46–49).

**Application**

On a personal level, the Parable of the Old and New invites us to reflect on Jesus' ability to make us new—to give us new hearts and new minds. That stage is set by Luke 5:32: "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Because all sin (Rom 3:23), all are in need of rebirth (John 3:1–13). Jesus offers new birth and new life (John 1:11–13; 14:6; Eph 2:1–10). We love the mercies of God as expressed through Jesus. We find them "new every morning" as we hope in Him (Lam 3:22–24).

See Romans 6:4 for a beautiful description of this new heart and mind: "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Colossians 2:12 and Galatians 2:20–21 document God's power to give new life.

We offer no apology for the peace, love, and joy

that fills our hearts. Our joy is "in the Lord" (Phil 4:4). Our peace is "the peace of God" (4:7). Our worldview, mindset, and attitude flow from our trust in God (4:9).

We appreciate the balance and wisdom of Scripture. This parable emphasizes joy, but hints at the inevitable ebb and flow of life (Luke 5:34–35). It emphasizes the new life ushered in by Jesus, but it acknowledges value in "the old" as well (5:39).

**Conclusion**

Life with Jesus brings a new joy and a fresh perspective. We serve the Master from happy hearts. We do not judge ourselves or allow ourselves to be judged by human standards and expectations. We know the joy of serving and loving only one Lord.

**Discussion**

1. How does the context of this parable contribute toward our understanding of it?

2. Of all the amazing new blessings and opportunities that Jesus brought to this world, which amazes and impresses you most? Why?

3. Why was it so difficult for the people of Jesus' day to understand the newness of His gospel?

4. How do we keep the gospel ever new in our hearts? Why is it important that we do?