

MEDITATION 21

Mark 2: 21-22

Jesus said: ²¹“No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. ²²Similarly, no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins, but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins.”

What will happen if you sew a new patch on an older piece of clothing? If the new patch shrinks in the washing, it will pull on the older clothing and cause a tear to happen worse than the original one in need of repair.

And what about putting new wine not yet aged into old and well used wine skins (the way wine was made in the ancient world was using such "skins")? The old skins will burst and all the wine will be lost.

So what is Jesus saying with his metaphoric illustrations? Trying to fit a new teaching and new understanding into old ideas and perspectives is bound to fail. Trying to understand Jesus and his revelation of God (which he is claiming is God's original revelation all along) within the older system established by the religious authorities, will only lead to misunderstanding Jesus. You cannot fit Jesus into existing ideas of what the messiah of God should be according to what has been taught so far.

But is new always better? And is old always meant to be discarded? No. Even though we live in a time and a world where the new is always seen as better and more improved, many of us are also aware of all that is precious and in some ways better about the old that is also being lost. How do we make space for new understandings and ways of thinking, believing and doing, but also appreciate in new ways and learn new ways to embrace the old and protect it?

What in your life is something to hold onto and nurture - relationships, practices, loyalties, truths, traditions, etc... And what in your life do you need to let go and discard?...

What in your life do you need to be open to change and find new ways of seeing, living and doing?... And what new ways of being and doing should you be wary of as not necessarily good for yourself, others or our world?...

This has to do with relationships... It has to do with work... It has to do with habits, practices, commitments... It has to do with the changes that come upon us not of our choosing as much as changes we choose to make.

Is someone's behaviour toward us no longer tolerable? Do we need permission to say no and enough? Or is our behaviour toward someone long habituated no longer acceptable? What has caused us to get into such a negative way relationally? What can we not change and what can we change? Do we need to find courage? Do we need to find grace? Do we need to adjust our expectations toward acceptance? Or do we need to raise them higher because we must grow to respect ourselves and how we deserve to be treated as a child of God?

Is a work situation no longer tolerable? Is it because we have changed, maybe gotten more tired? Is it that there have been changes slowly eroding the atmosphere or increasing the pressure or burden? Is it that the other person has changed and is changing and it becomes difficult to continue the same as before without great cost to our personal, mental and spiritual well-being?

I can go on and on with examples of how each of us may interact with the old and the new in our lives in the face of change, in the face of new understanding and insights, in the face of meeting new people, in the face of growing in valuing ourselves, in what we can tolerate, and what limits we must come to terms within our lives, our capacities, and our integrity.

PRAYER: Jesus, you are new wine... You are new clothing... Help us let go what blocks us from tasting you and putting you on more fully... You call us to love. Sometimes it's easy to love. Other times it's hard. Maybe it's the person that makes it hard. Maybe it's something in us that makes it hard. Maybe it's just the personal struggles we are going through which make it hard for us to have room to love or even tolerate others... And sometimes you call us not to tolerate but to find the courage and integrity to speak up and say no, or just walk away...

Give us the courage we need... Give us the grace we need... Give us the compassion so that we stand with others without having to judge or give advice not solicited... Give us the forgiveness in our heart... and give us the intolerance for injustice that activates us to stand up and speak out or cut off what is harmful or wounding to others as much as to ourselves...

Help us embrace the new that Jesus will bring into our lives at this time, as we walk the journey with him... In his name and through his Spirit we pray... Amen.