

Deane Church + Lostock Church w/b Sunday 8th October 2017

Matthew 9:14-17

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

¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ '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. ¹⁷ 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.'

So far in Matthew chapter 9, the teachers of the law think that Jesus is a blasphemer (v3) and the Pharisees are appalled that Jesus associates with 'tax collectors and sinners' (v11). John the Baptist is in prison (4:12) but his disciples/followers continue and now find common ground with the Pharisees (9:14) on the issue of fasting (i.e. abstaining from meals for a certain time). John the Baptist himself lived an austere life (11:18) and his followers seem to be continuing this. Pharisees at this time seem to have fasted twice a week (Luke 18:12) which was far beyond what the Old Testament law required. Fasting for Christians seems to have been an occasional and private (Matthew 6:16-18) practice.

1. Can you think of something that you have had to unlearn or become less reliant on in order to move on?
2. Why may changing faith/religious understanding be very difficult?
3. What is Jesus getting at in v15?

Jesus is the fulfilment of the Old Covenant with Israel (Matthew 5:17), whilst at the same time bringing in a New Covenant between God and his people (the Church / the 'new Israel'), which had been promised by God centuries earlier (Jeremiah 31:31).

4. Why couldn't the Jews (then or now) just bolt belief in Jesus onto their existing beliefs?
5. In what ways may a Christian today seek to sew unshrunk cloth onto an old garment or pour new wine into an old wineskin?