

## **Matthew 20-03-22b**

Beautiful arrangement rendered so skillfully by Dan. I appreciate Dan and Lori and Anna-Lynn and their ongoing conduit of blessing for us in music. And what a wonderful choice, selection in terms of the meaning of the lyrics and where our thoughts and our hearts and our future lies.

Let's continue our study now. We're in Matthew chapter nine. The disciples of John the Baptist come to Jesus saying, why do we and the Pharisees fast? Fast often, but your disciples do not fast.

And the setting in the background that we've already reviewed is the preceding scene of feasting, not just feasting per se, but feasting with undesirables. A lack of social distancing as it were. And so the question is put here to the Lord Jesus, and he is about to reply.

Jesus said to them, can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them and then they will fast. Let's, first of all, remind ourselves about fasting. They don't say we and the Pharisees take our sacrifices to the temple.

We and the Pharisees pay our tithes. We and the Pharisees perform this and that other provision of the law. They say we fast.

So my question is, what exactly does the law say about fasting? What do you think? Does the law require a fast or fasting at particular times? There is only one fast mentioned in the Old Testament that is required. You may be able to remember what this is. It's in Leviticus chapter 23 verse 27.

This is the only fast that by any stretch of the imagination could be said to be required by God. Not to say that fasting is not legitimate, that people didn't legitimately do it, that it didn't have a legitimate purpose. But in terms, if you're going to say that Jesus' upcoming metaphors and so on refer to the law, is this really what you want to use to represent the law? I think usually when you see a text note in your New King James and it says this isn't in the text, I generally, more often than not, will agree that it's probably superfluous.

Here, I think especially based on the parallels, often is legitimate. Fast often. And that's part of the point is that the best you can do in Leviticus 23, 27 is on the day of atonement.

This is once a year, 10th day of the seventh month. The day of atonement is a holy convocation for you. You shall afflict your souls, offer an offering made by fire to the Lord and afflicting your souls could involve a fast.

What does the Bible, the Old Testament Bible, the Bible that would exist in Jesus' day, what does it say about this sort of fasting? Keep your finger in Matthew and turn back to Isaiah chapter 58. The question has been occasioned by fasting. We do it.

Pharisees do it. Your disciples don't do it. Why? Isaiah chapter 58, cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, tell my people their transgressions and the house of Jacob, their sins.

Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways as a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the ordinances of their God. That's ordinance in the singular, but they're acting like something that they are not here. My people need to be told their transgression.

The house of Jacob needs to be told their sins. Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways as though they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God. They ask of me the ordinances of justice.

They take delight in approaching God. Why have we fasted? They say, and you have not seen, why have we afflicted our souls? And you take no notice. In fact, this is still verse three in the day of your fast, you find pleasure and exploit all your laborers.

Indeed, you fast for strife and debate and to strike with the fist of wickedness. So there is the appearance and there is the reality. Jesus and his disciples, the tax collectors and the sinners are feasting.

The disciples of John and the Pharisees are fasting, but who is really approaching God and who is really satiating and satisfying themselves? There is the appearance of approach. There is the appearance of interest. There is the appearance of, uh, you know, as a nation that does righteousness and does not forsake the ordinance of their God, we're fasting.

Well, fasting isn't even an ordinance. We've made it into one. And I don't have to regale you with how that has proliferated over the last 20 centuries or so, uh, in the church and sometimes church capital C, uh, creating ordinances that do not exist and creating offices and intermediate positions that do not exist as though you're a nation that does righteousness and doesn't forsake the real ordinances of God.

The real ordinances are expressed in the heart. So you're fasting in the day of your fast. You find pleasure.

You're perverting what a fast actually should do. And you're subverting it into something where, where, where a fast is supposed to direct you toward God. You're, you've directed it toward your own pleasure.

Well, uh, this and, uh, Zachariah chapter seven, if you want to flip over, remember, uh,

right before Malachi, Zachariah chapter seven, fourth year of King Darius came to pass. The word of the Lord came to Zachariah the fourth day of the ninth month, Kislev. The people sent Sherezer with, uh, Regem Melek and his men to the house of God to pray before the Lord and to ask the priests who were in the house of the Lord of the hosts.

And the prophet saying, should I weep in the fifth month and fast as I have done for so many years, the word of the Lord of hosts came to me saying, say to all the people of the land and to the priests, when you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months during those 70 years, did you really fast for me, for me? It's repeated when you eat. And when you drink, do you not eat and drink for yourselves? Should you not have obeyed the words of the Lord proclaimed through the former prophets when Jerusalem and the cities around it were inhabited and prosperous back before you went into captivity back before God had to bring down the hand of judgment and discipline? Wouldn't that have been a good time to listen to the words of the Lord? Now you're worried about whether you should keep on fasting as you did during the captivity. So there's not a bright set of concepts associated with fasting in the Old Testament.

It was commonly misused and it isn't an ordinance of the law to fast. So to criticize the disciples for not fasting or to question why they do not fast when the word of God does not call for them to fast in the way that the disciples of John and the Pharisees do. So now if they are asking, why did Jesus disciples not fast? We have to ask ourselves, why do the Pharisees and John's disciples fast? Why do they fast? If we're going to ask why somebody doesn't, we need to understand why somebody does.

If the law doesn't call for it, why are they doing it? What is fasting? Well, there's two answers to that question. One is what it is supposed to be. And the other is what we've just seen in the Old Testament, what people had turned it into.

And it was turned into a superficial and somewhat hypocritical display of dedication to God as a veneer hiding self-interest, a veneer of righteousness, a veneer of self-negation, self-denial. Fasting is I'm not eating my normal food. Typically it was accompanied by dressing down, sometimes sackcloth, sometimes ashes.

But the fasting was an overt signal to other people. I'm spiritual. That's why it was being done.

God didn't command it. It wasn't required. But when it was done properly, what was it? We've seen the abuse.

What did a proper fast accomplish? What was its purpose? Daniel fasted and prayed. The Lord Jesus fasted during his time of testing in the wilderness. There have been legitimate fasts recorded in scripture.

What was the purpose? What is the purpose of legitimate fasting? Let's say you just

receive an enormous blessing. You have just walked into the freshly swept and cleaned land of promise. The giants are gone.

The Philistines are gone. The Amorites are gone. The hills are flowing with milk and honey.

There's a fresh crop coming up in the fields. You're dwelling in Beulah land. Does anybody think, well, time to fast? When and why do people legitimately fast? There is a need to draw closer to God and to seek God to draw closer to us in a time of need.

We fast and pray. Fasting is almost typically accompanied by prayer. Jesus will talk about this in other contexts.

Fasting and prayer. So there is a sense of distance between ourselves or someone we represent or someone we're concerned about and we are making appeal to God and we want to close that distance. Fair? Does that make sense? That's why you would fast.

You're drawing attention. You're setting aside other things. You are devoting yourself to God because you're wanting to close a distance.

There's an issue. There's a need. And there's a need to focus and a need to invoke God's attention, God's presence, God's deliverance, God's power, whatever it may be.

So knowing what the legitimate function, the legitimate purpose of fasting is, at the time that Jesus goes to Matthew's house, at the time that Jesus goes to Zacchaeus house, at the time that he is with his disciples proclaiming the good news of the coming kingdom of God, healing diseases, casting out demons, demonstrating the presence and the power of God. Is this your typical occasion for fasting? No, it is not. It's wildly inappropriate to look around at the incursion for which man has been waiting ever since he walked out the garden of Eden and say, well, I need to close the distance between myself and God.

God is walking around in your midst. The disciples are 24 seven at this point with the Lord Jesus. You're going to fast to bring him closer.

Just move up a seat at the, at the next meal. You, the Lord Jesus says, behold, I stand at the door and knock. If you listen to me fast and pray, and I might come in.

Jesus is present. Let's have a meal that it's just wildly inappropriate. It's like throwing rice at a funeral.

It's like singing near my God to the, at a wedding. It's, it's just not the occasion. Is it when God is as close as God can get when you have Emmanuel right there, looking at him with your two eyes fasting as wonderful a thing as it is in its place is not apropos.

So this is going to be the nature of Jesus reply. And he brings this sense of

appropriateness to, to bear. Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? He goes straight to the point.

This is a wedding. This is a time of celebration. And the friends of the bridegroom are the guys who come and, uh, help set the thing up.

This is a common theme when things are beneficial and proper between God and man. It's pictured in these celebratory and wedding feast terms. So, uh, and, and even when there's, when there's trouble, God pictures it as there's something wrong where this ought to be a wedding and a, and a marriage that when, when Israel is disobedient, they've, they've messed up the wedding.

They've messed up the marriage. You go to Isaiah chapter 50, whereas the certificate of your mother's divorce whom I put away on which of my creditors have I sold you for your iniquities? You have sold yourselves for your transgressions. Your mother has been put away.

Uh, the, this was supposed to be a family. You are supposed to be children of God, but here we are in a broken home and who moved. I didn't sell you.

I didn't sell my children. I didn't divorce your mother. Why do we not have a happy home here? Product of a wedding product of a marriage.

Uh, you go a few chapters forward in Isaiah 54, uh, sing O barren woman, you who have not born break forth into singing and cry aloud. You who have not labored with child for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married woman says the Lord enlarge the place of your tent and so on. Uh, you're, you're going to have a home.

You're going to have children. This is going to be a wonderful family relationship in the presence of the Lord when restoration and healing and forgiveness come to Israel. Isaiah 62 verse five, as a young man marries a Virgin, so shall your sons marry you as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride.

So shall your God rejoice over you no longer a time for, um, confession, repentance, um, consciousness of sin. This is the time of restoration, the time of healing. And you think about the return of the prodigal.

Uh, it's not a time for recrimination, not a time for finger wagging, kill the fatted calf, put a ring on his finger, put new new clothes on him where we're going to celebrate. It is a time of celebration. This coming together, this closing of the distance that a sense of which often prompts the fast Jeremiah two 32, can a Virgin forget her ornaments or a bride her attire.

Yet my people have forgotten me days without number where there ought to be appreciation. There ought to be closeness and a sense of possession and a value. There

is this distance Jeremiah 31 verse 32, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took him by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant, which they broke though.

I was a husband to them says the Lord. This was supposed to be closeness. It was supposed to be fellowship.

It was supposed to be intimate, personal presence and contact. Israel broke the covenant, created the distance and those who sigh and cry. Remember the ink or an angel before I judge, I am going to mark those who sigh and cry.

I like that mark a lot better than the blood on the doorposts because you remember sheltering behind the blood on the doorposts on the first Passover. There was only one person in danger in the whole house, right? Just the firstborn in the days of judgment of Jerusalem, God sends the ink or an angel out and he says, mark every single individual. And when judgment and destruction comes, keep them away and safe.

They're marked. Why? Not because they made a decision in childhood to believe in God. They are those who sigh and cry.

If anybody is fasting, it's them. If anybody who is aware and feeling the distance between what ought to be and what is, it's these people. And because they care, because they recognize sin in the land, because they are sensitive to what the nation has become instead of what it is, they are marked.

They are preserved. They are spared. They are valued by God because they value God.

God closes that distance. He brings deliverance. He shows them his salvation in the midst of judgment.

Hosea chapter two, verse one and following, you remember that say to your brethren, my people and to your sisters, mercy is shown. Bring charges against your mother. Bring charges for she is not my wife, nor am I her husband.

Let her be put away for her harlotries from my sight. Let her adulteries be put from between her breasts. Lest I strip her naked and expose her as in the day she was born and make her like a wilderness and set her like a dry land and slay her with thirst.

I will not have mercy on her children for they are the children of harlotry. There's an occasion for fasting and prayer. There is an occasion for sighing and crying over separation, failure, covenant breaking.

And we're going to see it coming up later in this gospel in Matthew chapter 25. You remember your parable of wise and foolish virgins and the coming of the bridegroom. They are there to meet the bridegroom.

That's why they're there. Half of them are ready and enjoy his presence. The others who didn't pay attention to how much oil they had in their lamps and were interested in keeping themselves lit, so to speak, are those who miss out.

We'll see that Matthew 25, you remember it. John chapter three, verse 29. He who has the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice.

Paul will talk about it in second Corinthians chapter 11 verse two. I am jealous for you with godly jealousy, for I have betrothed you to one husband so that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. Closeness, lack of separation, no reason for distance, no iniquity separating between you and your God and your sins, hiding his face from you so that he doesn't hear.

Ephesians 5.32, Christ and the church, husbands love your wives, etc. In Revelation 19.7, at the end of the tribulation period, let us be glad and rejoice and give him glory for the marriage of the lamb has come and his wife has made herself ready. Revelation chapter 19, verse seven.

And again, in Revelation 21.9, one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me saying, come, I will show you the bride, the lamb's wife. Interesting description of that angel. We'll be continuing our discussion of angels this coming Thursday, because you remember that Revelation 19, the Lord Jesus returns, Revelation 20, you have the great white throne, 21 and 22 are new heavens, new earth, the kingdom of the father, the spirit and the bride say come and all of that.

So why do you have this reference back? Why is it this angel who directs John's attention to the lamb's wife? Well, we'll save that for an appropriate time. But the friends of the groom here, friends of the bridegroom that Jesus is talking about in Matthew 9.15, are literally sons of the bridal chamber. They're sons of the room, which is a metonymy meaning they are the groom's attendants, but they help get the room ready.

They're responsible for the environment. They are the sons of the bridal chamber, and they're the groom's friends. They have his interests at heart.

They are celebrating with him. They want to contribute to and make this the greatest day in their friend's life, so to speak. So they're in charge of the arrangements and they make sure that the festivities go as well as they possibly can.

So they're invested. They love the groom. Therefore, they are doing things.

They are present and they are active. They're not just passersby. Oh, that's my buddy.

It looks like he's having a wedding. They are intimately connected to all of the

proceedings, and they are helping to make it happen. And their motivation is what? Love for the groom.

That's why they're happy. That's why they're motivated. That's why they serve.

Friends of the bridegroom. Are we friends of the groom? We are more than friends. Friends of the groom are the Old Testament saints.

We are much more central in this whole proceeding than the friends of the groom. The disciples at this point are not in the church age. They are not body of Christ yet.

They are at this point, Old Testament believers in the Old Testament age. The law is still in effect. The Lord Jesus has not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it.

He hasn't fulfilled it yet. This is Old Testament days. And those who come to the Lord Jesus at this point are not church.

There's a lot of believers in the Lord Jesus. You're the Christ, the son of the living God. They're not church.

They're not body of Christ. They are cognizant Old Testament believers. Job is not that different.

I know my redeemer lives and I will see him one day. Well, these people are seeing him right now. Friends of the groom.

Can they mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? So you can see that fasting is presented by the Lord Jesus. Legitimate fasting is not apropos when there's no distance to be closed. Friends of the groom are with the groom.

It's a day of celebration. What do you want to fast for? So if you go back to the Pharisees and go back to the disciples of John and they are continuing to fast. What's the problem here? Where should they be? Where should the Pharisees be? And more centrally, where should these asking disciples of John be? Why are they still disciples of John? John's been in prison a long time now.

The disciples of John. This is a group. This is a collection.

This is a fraternity here of men who identify as followers of John. John's whole mission was to do what? Point to Christ. By the way, what is our whole mission? Who am I and why am I here? Point to Christ, reflect Christ, represent Christ.

What is the purpose of the friends of the bridegroom? Centralize, optimize, celebrate, make everything as great as possible for the groom. They are defined as friends of the groom. That's what defines them.

Why would you define yourself as a disciple of John when the groom is here? The question almost answers itself. Why do we fast? Because we're in the wrong place doing the wrong thing at the wrong time. We ought to be a friend of the groom and we ought to be doing what the friends of the groom are doing, which is celebrating.

Why are you with the Pharisees? Because you don't recognize that the gap has been closed. That Yeshua is also named Emmanuel, God with us. And by implying through your actions and your practice, that there is still a distance that needs to be closed between God and man and that his salvation has not yet been revealed.

You're in the wrong place at the wrong time doing the wrong thing. And Jesus very elegantly and very tactfully makes this point to the disciples of John. He doesn't rebuke them.

He doesn't correct them. He doesn't instruct them. He simply informs them by way of this beautiful example of what is apropos.

He doesn't even say, I am the groom, does he? He just says, can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them. And then they will fast. Then they will fast.

Why are they fasting? Separation. Jesus says fasting is appropriate for the friends of the groom when the groom is gone. There will be times when that is going to be appropriate.

This isn't it. Know the times, know the seasons. Ecclesiastes, time and a season for the purposes under heaven.

We need to recognize what they are. There is a time to fear and there's a time to not fear. Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Other kinds of fear, not so much. God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power of love and a sound mind. So you cannot help but think in these terms.

And I've quoted it several times now. I that quote ultimately has its home. Remember the letters to the seven churches.

This is the seventh and last. To the angel of the church of the Laodiceans. We've been learning and reviewing what we know about angels.

What kind of angel is this? Is this the kind of angel that comes from heaven or is this the kind of angel that carries messages? Right. So to the messenger, this would be the pastor, the church of the Laodiceans. Right.

These things says the amen. That's the confirmation. That's the recognition of truth, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.

I know your works that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or hot. Iced coffee.

A lot of people like it. Hot coffee. I certainly like it.

Lukewarm coffee. I don't know anybody that says, could I please have a cup of lukewarm coffee? Tea. Iced tea.

A lot of people enjoy it. Hot tea. A lot of people enjoy it.

Tepid tea. Oh, give me some of that. People just don't.

Hot is good for warming you up when you're cold, comforting you when you're not feeling good. Cold is great when you're hot, you've been working, you need some refreshment. Tepid, you would think, well, but 98.6, wouldn't that be a great temperature? You know, they don't put tepid water makers in the door of your refrigerator, do they? So they don't make tepid kettles.

Your coffee pot doesn't have an extra setting for, well, lukewarm. You're neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot because you are lukewarm, neither cold nor hot.

I will spew you out of my mouth. Very graphic image there. Why? Verse 17.

Because you say, I am healthy. Healthy don't need a physician, do they? You say, I'm rich, I'm wealthy, I have need of nothing. And you do not know, do not comprehend, do not recognize, do not acknowledge, do not confess that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked.

What is the difference here? Physically, Laodicea in these days was a prosperous area, a lot of very well-off people. So looking at the physical and making a judgment based on that, not looking at the internal and the spiritual. So Jesus says, I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire that you may be rich and white garments that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed.

And anoint your eyes with eye salve that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and change your mind.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. Anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and dine with him and he with me to him who overcomes. I will grant to sit with me on my throne of all of the various overcomer promises.

The one associated here is the one with no distance. How much distance between this overcomer and the Lord Jesus sitting with him on his throne, not sitting near him on another throne. Remember the 24 elders are going to be sitting on thrones and casting crowns and all the rest of it.

This person doesn't have his own little throne nearby. Sit with me on my throne. It's the opposite of the distance that requires a fast.

It's the opposite of the kind of necessary repentance and confession that will close that distance that Jesus has just been talking about. How much distance is between the father and the son? That's how much distance there will be between the overcomer and the Lord Jesus. Sit with me on my throne as I overcame and sat down with my father on his throne.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches. It's all about recognizing distance that needs to be closed when the bridegroom is away, when there's distance. Now, what is Jesus going to promise the disciples later? He tells the disciples of John here in Matthew nine, there's going to come a day when the friends of the bridegroom are going to fast because the bridegroom is taken away from them.

Very important clue here. It doesn't say when the bridegroom is going to leave and go to a far country to accept a kingdom. What does it say? He is taken from them.

You get the idea that this is really not his first choice, but he is taken. These are the days of the arrest, the trial and the crucifixion. That's when they will mourn.

That's when they are going to feel the separation. How long is that going to last? That separation is only going to last as long as the sign of Jonah is being displayed. Heart of the earth, three days and three nights.

That's what the bridegroom being taken represents. What happens right after that? They're in the upper room behind a locked door and the Lord Jesus appears. Do they immediately drop all of their food and the broiled fish and honeycomb and say, well, time to fast.

Jesus eats with them. Portent of things to come. One of the first things Jesus does when he appears to the disciples, partly to prove that he's really substantial and not a vision.

They can look around later and say, did we dream that? Well, look, the honey and the fish are gone, but it is also a portent sharing the meal. It's just a taste. It's a foretaste of glory divine, no longer a need.

And what does he say right before he disappears into the clouds in Acts chapter one? Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age, I am with you. So is it a time for us to fast because the bridegroom has been taken away or because the Lord Jesus is not present on the earth? That's not a reason to fast. Why would we need to fast? If I have created a distance, if my sins have separated between me and my God, between me and my Lord, between me and my savior, between me and the presence and power of the Holy Spirit that is here to convict me and remind me of who I am and why I'm here, bring the scriptures to my mind, help me navigate the landscape of this life.

So Jesus says, the friends of the bridegroom will mourn when he is taken away. Now, no one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on our old garment for the patch pulls away from the garment and the tear is made worse. You're very familiar with this whole thing, you know about the new and old cloth, you know about this.

Jesus appeals to our knowledge of these things, past and present. Back in these days, they had wool and if it had not been fulled, f-u-l-l-e-d, when it got damp, it would shrink and pull away. Here's the thing.

You don't put a patch of new cloth on an old garment. Why? It will shrink, tear the old cloth. We look at that and we say, sure, obviously the casual observer, and we go on.

What we tend to forget is, why did this question never even come up? I mean, why did this situation come up? Why would somebody be messing around with a patch made of new material? I've got a lot of old garments. I was thinking about that when I picked my tie this morning. Sometimes when Matthew plays an archive and I say, well, look, that's eight, ten years ago.

I just wore that tie last week. We have a lot of clothing that lasts. I hesitate to tell you how old some of my clothes are.

I've got a couple of pieces of clothing that I think are older than me because I got them from my dad. What's the whole deal with the patch? You don't have a patching situation unless the old garment has torn. A good old garment, you know, comfortable pair of jeans.

Of course, people wear torn jeans now. When I was little, jeans got torn. You got an iron-on patch and you had to go to school with these big dark blue squares on your knees for your light blue jeans.

Everybody says, oh, mom patched your jeans, huh? But the patching situation tells you something about the old garment. It's not just old. What else is it? It's failing.

A good old garment doesn't need a patch, right? This is not just old. It's old and failing. Well, you cannot put new stuff into a failing garment.

He doesn't say you can't wear old clothes, right? And he doesn't say you put a new patch on a new garment either. We're not going to get the two sides of the coin like we are with the wineskin. He just says an old failing garment, you can't patch it with something new.

You can't really patch it with something old because why did it tear in the first place? It's already failing. There's really no point in patching it with anything, but certainly not with something new. But why does this illustration work? It's the quality of the new patch.

He doesn't say you can't patch an old garment because it tore in the first place and it's just going to tear again no matter what you do. He doesn't talk about the failing quality of the old garment. He says the reason this patch doesn't work is there is a dynamic quality to the new.

There is movement in the new cloth. It's got potential to change and that dynamic and that change, and it's a good change. We used to have to buy our Levi's and wash them in hot water to get them to the right size.

You had to buy them big and shrink them yourself in the old days. Remember that? Couldn't put anything else in there or it would turn blue. But then they started selling pre-shrunk.

But it's always more fun to get your own and make them conform to your own particular body shape and break in your own shoes. Do you really want pre-broken shoes? Some other hoard of people somewhere are going to wear the shoes and walk around them and break them in. You want to break in your own shoes.

But there's a period of adjustment where they change and this change is good. This change helps it fit and is productive. There's movement.

There's life of a kind in the new patch. And so you don't put that into a system that is already showing signs of failing and of having served its purpose. There's a time when the old garment was new and it was fine, but its time has come and gone.

And rather than patching it, you don't just get a piece of new cloth. What do you do? You get a whole new garment, a whole new way to achieve righteousness, not by the works of the law, not by these outward things. But then he moves in verse 17, new wine into old wineskins, else the wineskins break.

Once again, this picture, like the preceding one, has to do with the dynamic quality of the new wine. Now, the way this worked is as soon as you stop the grapes, they would put them in clay jars, what they call the must, M-U-S-T, and it's mashed grapes and such. And that's the first stage is mash it up.

This starts the fermentation process and the big expelling of gases and fermentation products takes place when it is must. Well, they did that in clay jars. Once that big first fermentation phase had passed, then they would take it and put it into the wineskins to finish.

And again, it would, most of the gas had already escaped, but a little more would come out. If you put the freshly stomped grapes in a wineskin, even a new wineskin would burst. This is a goat skin.

They so shut the leg holes and the tail hole and such and turned the thing inside out.

And after clipping the hair short and the wine actually went on the inside. But here they would put it in.

But there is dynamic, there is movement. The patch is moving inward. The wine, as it were, the fermentation product is moving outward.

And you get the idea that the new cloth is consolidating itself. It's a property of itself. The new wine is propagating something outward and is going to be used in an outward sense.

And so there's this sense of dynamic that draws close and makes stronger. And then there's this sense of expansion that completes a maturation process. It's mature after it's been through this rather lengthy process.

New wine into new wineskins and both are preserved. So the Pharisees and the disciples of John are clinging to the old garment, clinging to the wineskins that were once new. Old wineskins were once new.

Old garments were once new, but they have served their purpose. And you've got to know when it's time to change clothes. You've got to know when it's time to update the wardrobe.

You've got to know when it's time to get new wineskins because there's something dynamic going on. If you stop growing, this is our point of application. If you stop recognizing the new things that God is doing, if you become entrenched and satisfied with the status quo, you're going to tear.

The next strain that comes along is going to tear you. If there's not a dynamic, if there's not a strength that comes from change, you're just going to tear under stress. The cloth situation, stress, creating a tear.

Wineskin situation, stress, creating a tear. If you're not flexible, if you're not prepared, if you're not in a process of productive change, that's what we want to be in. And this is in our spiritual life.

Can't be so stuck that we don't see the grace of God when it comes, that we don't experience it and enjoy it and rejoice in it. Hear a knock at the door and think, well, that's just another traveling salesman. That's just another Jehovah's Witness.

That's just another unwanted, unwelcome, accosting. Pay attention. If it's the Lord Jesus at the door, you want to be opening that door.

You want that closeness and fellowship. Those are the people that are going to be close to the Lord Jesus in the age that comes, in the future. Sit with him on his throne, walk with him in white, share the hidden manna, the white stone, the new name, and so on.

Got to be ready to flex, ready to recognize the new thing that God is doing. Sometimes it's time to change churches. Sometimes it's time to find new teaching.

We've all done it. May need to do it again at some point. Be ready to grow, be ready to move, be ready to adjust, to change, to growth, to greater strength.

New cloth is stronger than old, new wine skin stronger than old, because it's flexible. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for the preservation of the works and the words of the Lord Jesus himself. What a privilege it is to see him and to hear him through the preservation of the truth of your word. We thank you for the ministry of your Holy Spirit that makes it real and pertinent to us.

We pray that as we reflect on these things, that we can shine as lights in the midst of our generation, that we can be a beacon of hope and opportunity to those who recognize that there is something wrong, who recognize a need, who are those who would draw close to the Lord Jesus at the banquet and celebrate the closeness of his presence and through him, closeness and fellowship with you. We pray these things in Jesus name. Amen.