

LESSONS FROM THE TABLE:

Jesus' Guide to Wine Pairing

June 12, 2022

Overarching Theme: 2022 – *The Year of the Lord's Favor* (Luke 4:19)

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

Core Point:

As the world begins awakening from 2 years of pandemic stupor, the words of Jesus proclaiming "the year of the Lord's favor" is a message whose time has come. This passage from Luke 4 harkens back to the 'year of jubilee' of Leviticus 25 and Isaiah 61, a year of a fresh start, a clean slate and reset for everyone who can envision new *possibilities* with God this Pentecost season and always.

Reflect on this Scripture: Luke 5:27-39 NRSV ²⁷ *After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax-collection station, and he said to him, "Follow me."* ²⁸ *And he got up, left everything, and followed him.* ²⁹ *Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house, and there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others reclining at the table with them.* ³⁰ *The Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"* ³¹ *Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician but those who are sick;* ³² *I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."* ³³ *Then they said to him, "John's disciples, like the disciples of the Pharisees, frequently fast and pray, but your disciples eat and drink."* ³⁴ *Jesus said to them, "You cannot make wedding attendants fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you?"* ³⁵ *The days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days."* ³⁶ *He also told them a parable: "No one tears a piece from a new garment and sews it on an old garment; otherwise, not only will one tear the new garment, but the piece from the new will not match the old garment.* ³⁷ *Similarly, no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins and will spill out, and the skins will be ruined.* ³⁸ *But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins.*^[a] ³⁹ *And no one after drinking old wine desires new wine but says, 'The old is good.'*

This Week: Luke 5:27-39 NRSV

The widely despised tax collector Levi responds to Jesus' surprising invitation by leaving everything and following him. Levi even throws a great, expensive banquet so Jesus can influence Levi's friend group. This drew sharp criticism from the Pharisees and their scribes, first regarding Jesus' unscrupulous decision to eat with such 'sinners', and the second regarding his lax approach to fasting (in contrast with more strict Pharisees). Jesus answers the first question with proverb underscoring his purpose (*those who are sick need a physician*), and he second with a metaphor of a wedding.

Since mourning was one of the reasons for fasting, Jesus points out that mourning would be inappropriate in the context of a wedding. In the extended metaphor, Jesus may have been claiming that the time of the coming of the kingdom is a time of joy and celebration, not unlike that of a wedding. Fasting would be appropriate at other times, but this new day announcing God's good news to the poor, the outcast, and even the tax collector would be a time for celebration, not fasting.

Jesus concludes his teaching with this obvious observation - No one would pour new wine into old wineskins. The point of this proverb is that as the new wine ferments it will give off gas and stretch the wineskin. If the wineskin is old and brittle, it will break rather than stretch, and the wine will be lost. The challenge of the sayings, therefore, is to see Jesus and his teachings as new wine that will require new wineskins. The contrast, therefore, is a double one, between wine and wineskins and between the old and the new. Those who took offense because Jesus' disciples were not following established religious rules had failed to see that something new had come, and they were unable to distinguish the wine from the wineskins. Their concern was simply with patching the old garment and preserving the old wineskins, rather than welcoming the new kingdom and community of grace offered to all, especially people like Levi.

- The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary, Vol IX, 130-31.

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. What was so surprising (even shocking) about Jesus' invitation for Levi to follow him? What does this say about the grace of God?
2. Why do you think Jesus invited Levi to be a disciple when everyone else in that day would have written him off? What do you think Jesus saw in Levi?
3. The wedding metaphor envisions the new kingdom as a community of celebration – offering good news to the poor, the outcast and the marginalized. How good are we at celebrating this good news for the poor, the outcast and the marginalized today?

4. The Pharisees represented the old wineskins of established religious rules and boundaries. Is there a human tendency to value rules over relationships? Is this a problem for us today?
5. What are some ways that we can be a new wineskin community, receptive to the new wine (Jesus and his teaching) referred to in Luke 5:38?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Luke 5:37 *“Similarly, no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins and will spill out, and the skins will be ruined.”*