Something Old, Something New

Scripture Reading — Mark 2:18-22

“He pours new wine into new wineskins.” Mark 2:22 —

In ancient times, wine was stored in soft bags of sheepskin. The problem was that as the skins aged, they became rigid and brittle. Because newly fermented wine gives off gas, it needs to be in a flexible container. Putting new wine into old, brittle skins would be disastrous.

Jesus uses this imagery to show the radical new nature of his mission and ministry. The gospel message is dynamic and lively, not static. Jesus’ very presence would eventually burst the old, traditional ways of the Jewish religion. The old structures of temple worship, animal sacrifices, and Levitical priesthood could no longer hold the new work God was doing.

The new wine of the gospel is still being poured out today. Those who have tasted it, who have put their trust in Jesus, have been transformed. Old sinful patterns are broken, and a new freedom in Christ is experienced. That’s what spiritual conversion is about.

God’s Spirit is on the move today. So individual Christians and Christian churches need to remain flexible and ready to be stretched. Some of our old time-honored ways and cherished patterns may not hold the new work of the Spirit very well. So they may need to be transformed or even discarded. New traditions may need to be established so that we can continue to be effective vessels for God in our world today.

Prayer

Lord, we know your old story is being told in new, creative ways. Make us flexible to receive a fresh outpouring of your Spirit and to share it effectively with others. Amen.