

1. Introduction

Good morning! Last weekend, Frederick and Cotoyo got married and we had a big party in Dan & Jill's yard. Everyone was eating, drinking, singing, dancing and having fun. That was a special occasion, but sometimes we have a party even though there is no particular special occasion.

For example, we have a Filipino & Friends Party at my home once a year. Hopefully we will be able to have some other parties as well. Most people really like parties. It is fun to get together and talk and eat. Sometimes important things happen during parties also. People make new friends, or maybe even meet their future husband or wife. And once in a while, someone meets Jesus at a party as people talk and share about their lives and faith.

I have met some Christians who are very formal and strict. They hardly ever smile and they don't go to parties. I think their feeling is that we should take our faith seriously, and they are right about that; we should take our faith seriously. But one of the best ways to do that is to rejoice in our relationship with Jesus. The Bible speaks of the joy of the Lord. And, in the gospels, Jesus attends weddings and banquets and is often eating and drinking with many people. I think Jesus loves parties. In today's passage also, Jesus attends a banquet given in His honor. It is a special occasion, a tax collector named Levi, who is also called Matthew, decides to follow Jesus. And then he throws a big party to celebrate with his friends. Let's take a look at what happens, Luke 5:27-39.



2. Scripture Luke 5:27-39

[27] After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, [28] and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. [29] Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. [30] But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" [31] Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. [32] I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." [33] They said to him, "John's disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking." [34] Jesus answered, "Can you make the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? [35] But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast." [36] He told them this parable: "No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. [37] And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. [38] No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. [39] And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, 'The old is better.' "

3. Teaching

Matthew Levi was a tax collector. Tax collectors, and others who worked for the Roman government, were excluded from the synagogue and were despised by most Jews. Since the respectable people excluded them, the tax collectors and other despised people had to make friends with each other. Matthew probably had a tax collection stand along the main road near Capernaum. As merchants, farmers, and fishermen, passed by his stand, he



could inspect their goods and tax them. Jesus and his disciples had probably passed by Matthew's tax stand many times, and sometimes they had probably been required to pay taxes.

But then a very special day came. Matthew Levi was at his tax booth when Jesus approached him. There were probably others following Jesus and watching the scene. They might have wondered, *"Will Jesus rebuke the tax collector? Or will Jesus refuse to speak to him?"* But Jesus shocked them all. **Luke 5:27b-28, "Follow me," Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.**

Jesus still speaks today saying, **"Follow me."** But how do we respond? Some people refuse. Some people delay and plan to follow Jesus later. Some want to follow Jesus, but they try to carry all of their old stuff along with them. But Matthew shows us the best response. **"Levi got up, left everything and followed him."** Levi left everything. Levi was not planning on coming back. Levi's heart had let go of its attachment to money, authority, and job security. And then he was free, free to follow Jesus.

This is the same man who gave us the Gospel of Matthew. He was set free by Jesus' call to follow Him, and he followed Jesus for the rest of his life. It sounds counterintuitive, but when we choose to follow Jesus we become truly free. **John 8:36** tells us, **"So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."** In Christ, Matthew was free to live as a human being should live, in fellowship with God, bringing glory to God, and making a real difference in the world. In Christ, Matthew found the best kind of freedom, freedom from sin and death, freedom to live for Jesus.



Matthew wanted to celebrate his new freedom and introduce all of his friends to Jesus. **Luke 5:29, "Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them."** This must have been a great party. A large crowd of people came to eat and drink and talk. And while they were there, they would have heard Matthew Levi explain that the party was for Jesus, and Jesus would surely have spoken and shared God's love with them. Recently, I shared that, *"Friends bring friends to Jesus."* In this story, Matthew threw a big party so that all of his friends could meet Jesus at once.

I imagine that they were having a wonderful time, eating, drinking, and listening to Matthew talk about why he had decided to follow Jesus, and then listening to Jesus talk. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law objected. They thought things were getting out of hand. To the Pharisees, all of this noisy fun was unacceptable.



Luke 5:30, "But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"" To the Pharisees, tax collectors and sinners were to be looked down on and despised. Certainly you would not sit at the same table with them and have a party. But what did Jesus say? **Luke 5:31-32, "Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.""**

Here, Jesus compares Himself to a doctor who has come to care for the sick. Of all the sicknesses known to mankind, none is more deadly than sin; sin always results in death. But Jesus is the Great Physician; He provides for the healing of the nations. And, from the rest of Scripture, we know that all people are sinners. As **Romans 3:23** tells us, **"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."**

The problem the Pharisees had was that they did not think of themselves as sick, and so they were not willing to take the medicine. What is the medicine that heals the sickness of sin? It is repentance from sin and faith in Jesus. When Matthew answered the call of Jesus to follow Him, he left everything behind; this action speaks of repentance, a complete change of heart. And, when Matthew held the banquet for Jesus, Matthew celebrated his salvation and testified to his friends about Jesus. But, these Pharisees are not willing to leave their pride behind. They did not even realize that their pride was sin.



After this, they asked why Jesus' disciples did not fast. But Jesus pointed out that the guests at a wedding never fast while the bridegroom is with them. It would be rude to fast during a wedding feast. I think they must have been surprised by Jesus' answer. Jesus was comparing Himself to a bridegroom and His disciples to the wedding guests. But where was the wedding? Where was the bride?

Jesus continued and spoke of how no one would tear a piece from a new garment to patch an old garment, and no one would put new wine into old wineskins. The Pharisees were familiar with these things, but I don't think they understood what Jesus was talking about. I think Jesus was actually speaking of the same truths using three different examples, the wedding, the garment, and the wineskin.

The religion of the Pharisees was like an old garment, worn by the years and stained by unbiblical practices that were far from the heart of God. Here I have an old t-shirt with a hole in it. What should I do with it? Should I cut a piece from a new tuxedo and use it to patch my old t-shirt? No! The tuxedo would be ruined and the patch would never match. Just like this old t-shirt, the old religion of the Pharisees was old and ragged. It was not going to be patched, it would be set aside and a new faith would become the center of God's work in the world.



In those days, the juice of grapes was placed into new wineskins. A new skin was soft and flexible and would stretch when the juice fermented, so the wine was safe. But, old skins were hard and stiff and would not stretch any more. You could not put new wine into an old skin, it would burst and the skin and wine would both be lost. The religion of the Pharisees was like the old wineskin and the Law of Moses was like the old wine. The Law of Moses itself was good, and the Pharisees would continue to live by it. But with the coming of Jesus, the new wine of the Gospel was being prepared, and a new and flexible container would be needed to hold it. This new wineskin is the church.



In the Old Testament, especially in Ezekiel 16 and in Hosea, Israel is compared to an unfaithful wife, a wife that God married and was determined to love, even though she was unfaithful because she kept falling into idol worship. But with the coming of Jesus, there was something new. Jesus, God the Son, was not to be the husband of unfaithful Israel. Instead, Jesus was to be a bridegroom, and the church was to be His bride.

Jesus uses the wedding, the garment, and the wineskin illustrations to explain that His coming means that God is doing something completely new. Israel and the Law of Moses would no longer be the standard for a relationship with God. Instead, the church and the Gospel of Jesus Christ would be at the center of God's work in this world. Perhaps we can give the symbols that Jesus used these approximate meanings.

Israel ~ God's wife	Old garment ~ Jewish faith	Old wine ~ the Law of Moses Old wineskin ~ Israel
The Church ~ Jesus' bride	New garment ~ Christian faith	New wine ~ the Gospel of Jesus New wineskin ~ the church

4. Conclusion

Wherever Jesus goes, He is always doing a new work. And Jesus is here with us now as well. He is still inviting people to follow Him. And to those who say, "Yes," He brings a new miracle of freedom to live as we are meant to live, in fellowship with God. The invitation is open and the time is now. Will you say, "Yes," to Jesus? I pray that you will. And then you will join the great wedding feast in heaven that is spoken of in **Revelation 19:7, "Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready."** I pray that all of us, along with our families, friends and loved ones will all be there, together on that day. It will be the greatest party ever! Amen!



5. Closing Prayer