

Three interesting readings.

One is a commandment, one of the Ten Commandments. It is an instruction. It is a must do. Let's leave it for a while. Let focus on the other two readings about wine.

The other two are in the form of parables. They are observations made in order to convey a parallel truth.

They are not about whether you should drink wine or not. They are not about whether to drink old wine or new.

Their foundation is that they are observation that all at the time would have known to be true.

In this case I want to focus on the ones about wine but the clothing ones would have worked.

What people would have known at the time is that when you make wine you put it in new wine skins. **That a wine skin was one of the first single use packaging.** You used it once and you through it out.

The reason being that if you put new wine into an old skin it would not have the elasticity to cope with the fermentation process. And they would spit open at the weakest point.

You see new wine has plenty of sugar that will keep the fermentation process going for some time. It is young and sweat. With time it will mature, and the maturing will be added to by the skin. A wine skin is not like a sterile glass bottle. It will add to the ferment from substances in the skin. With time it will be old wine that has developed its flavour and maturity, the tannin and acidity will give a rounded beauty that only age gives to wine.

So new wine goes into new skins.

Now another observational truth. Now one in their right mind would pour old wine back into a new skin for it would be ruined. It would start to ferment again from the skin. Being exposed to the air it might turn to vinegar. Whatever it would be ruined. The beauty of its age will be wasted, lost.

And another observational truth is that most people having drink some old wine will not desire new wine. That old wine has a depth of flavour. A way of crossing the pallet to bring a pleasure that new young wine has yet to develop.

There is something about old wine that create a call to slow down. To be reflective and meditative. It bring you into the moment and it extends the moment. Old wine is saved for occasion and it makes occasion.

Old wine has what new wine will develop into, if given the time.

SO that is the experiential observational back ground to this parable on wine.

Oh one other point. Sometime something goes wrong in the skins and the wine will have gone off. The skin equivalent of corking. (Not all old wine is good wine)

So let's turn to the parables and ask what they are talking about. What is the parallel truth they are trying to explain, highlight, draw our attention to?

Matthew and Mark both tell part of the parable. Just the bit about not putting new wine into old wine skins. My past experience of these passages was to say that when you enter into a new place in faith that you cannot house it in the old structures. So the followers of Jesus could not remain in the synagogues. That those who understood salvation from grace could not remain in the established church at the reformation. And those who had found new 'life in the spirit' in the 70's and 80's could not remain in the traditional churches with their established liturgy.

Luke however poses a problem. After saying we cannot put new wine into old skins he goes on to say. And no one after drinking old wine desire new. For they say the old is good!. The old is better.

This kind of undoes the idea of when you enter into the new you should lever the structures of the old.

I have puzzled over this over the years.

And then I recently came across in my reading a reference to the gospel of Thomas. A collection of saying of Jesus. Saying 47 we had read this morning. It reverses the parable. Starting with the treasuring of old wine for its depth its mature rounded flavours, its beauty that come from age. And having drunk it now one would desire to drink new wine.

And then goes on to repeat the observation that we did not put new wine in old skins lest they burst **and adds** that we do not put old wine in new skins as it will spoil.

This leads me to a different possibility of the meaning of the parable, one I'm indebted to Stephen Jenkins for. I offer it to you for your reflection.

This may be a parable of ageing. A parable that speaks to the importance to growing old. After all it is about wine growing older and wine skins growing older.

It speaks to an idea that **growing old is the aim**, the objective of life, not the unintended consequences of living beyond youth.

It speaks to an idea that growing old is Good, the objective of life, **not the unfortunate consequences of living beyond youth.**

It is about valuing the beauty that come with Age.

I think of an elderly man telling me his wife is more beautiful now than the day they met 70 years before. This is the beauty that comes off experience, of learning, of reflection. It comes from the natural process of ageing where what is of importance comes clear. It is the depth of 60 years together.

Youth is full of potential it is full of energy. It is bubbling over, with so many direction it can head. It is energised with potential. It is anything but still. And that is good, it is what youth is about.

But the old has become still, and been refined into the best it can be through time an experience.

This is the wine that in Jesus mind is the wine we desire over the new. And note this is a 30 year old saying this! We are a

faith based on the teaching of a 30 year old. A thirty year old who values his elders.

The parable is about the wine not the drinker. It is of the ageing of wine, not the age of the drinker.

So Jesus is saying that whatever age you are you will prefer the old wine. You will value it, you will bring it out for the special occasions. It is to be treasured in the occasions it is used and in the drinking as well.

It is not for drinking races, or for preloading before a party. Old wine is to be respected.

So what about the two things people **do not do** with wine? Again these are not rules but observations off what people have learnt to do form experience.

Putting new wine in Old skins. Or old wine in new skins

I may be wrong but I am lead to believe that in Jesus day for the most part a person could expect to learn what we need to learn in life in our youth and middle years so that when people reached old age they could be mature. They could be grown up.

In my great grandparents day that was a reasonable expectation

In my grandparents day they had to deal with dismal currency. My grandmother still converting things back into pounds shillings and pence in her late 80's.

And of course the loss of pounds and oz's. Feet, yards miles. Etc. (I still only understand a babies weight in pounds and height in feet in inches. And I came after the changeover. I was recently disappointed to discover that none of the rulers at home had inches on them.)

But today as indicated in the meditation we are constantly facing change and having to learn new things. Those watching this on live stream are using skills you never imagined you would need or have 20 years ago.

Growing up is no longer possible. But neither is it valued

We are continuously being asked to keep adding new wine to our old skins. And we are being told learning new skills will keep us young. My Question is who will be the 'old' the old wine, if we are being kept young. Who will bring the beauty of age to our society?

It seems to me that people struggle to keep up with the advancing technology till they give up.

I am also noticing that now, instead of seeking out the elders, the old who have the wisdom we have entered into generation

wars. We celebrate young people entering into the traditional places of the elders. Are we pouring new wine into old skins? The national party has faced this in a number of its young MP's of recent years.

Social media is an echo chamber for generational conflict. A speech to the political leaders by a young Swedish teenager accusing baby boomers for robbing her of her future is amplified around the world so that being old is no longer treasure but rather makes us guilty of destroying the planet.

Many things are working towards seeing the older generations as a problem which is capped off with the superannuation payments as a burden on the young. This is not good for the mental health of the old.

Generational labels are used to make generational wars.

Yet at the same time youth mental health problems are increasing as a problem. In the generation wars, amplified in social media the voice of the old is no longer being heard and our young are becoming ill. The self-medicating drug of choice is not the phycodals of the past it is Ox-codeine and Fentanyl. Both are anaesthetics. To put you to sleep. To deaden the pain.

The word Anaesthetic: the prefix 'an' is to negate. Aesthetic is beauty. To negate beauty. In a time when the deep beauty

of the old is rejected we have the young anaesthetising themselves.

To me the message of this parable is the value of growing old. Wine is messed up if the process of ageing is disrupted.

We need to allow people to stop growing and learning and allow them to be grown up. We need to allow our ageing people to look like they are ageing and celebrate it. To be and look like old wine skins.

We need our old people to be old wine and let that old wine flow with all its beauty in society. That may be what our young people need.

As a society we need to stop expecting our old to stay young by constant change. Because when our elders fail to achieve this the old Wine is ruined. And they are discarded.

I do not have time in this short sermon to explore this in depth. But I ask you to reflect on this parable. In light of ageing.

Of not asking our young to take on the roles of maturity, give them time to develop, grow, learn, gain experience and reflect on it in order to become Old.

Let Old be the goal. Not a problem

Our first reading this morning was from the Ten Commandments. Honour your father and mother. Maybe Moses was hoping that in doing so we may receive some beautiful wine wisdom out of the old wineskins, the old wrinkly bodies.

Oh and just as some wine will spoil in the wine skins. Getting old is not a grantee to beauty. But as a society we can do a lot better at reaping the Good wine

No one having drink old wine will desire the new. It is just so much better. So let the new wine be new wine until with time it will be a national treasure.