

New Wine

January 15 2012

Ephesians 5:15-21, John 2:1-11

So how are those new year resolutions going 15 days into 2012?

Perhaps most of us can identify with this prayer. Dear Lord, So far I'm doing all right. I have not gossiped, lost my temper, been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish, or self indulgent. I have not whined, complained, cursed or eaten any chocolate. I have not charged anything to my credit card. However, I am going to get out of bed in a few minutes, and I will need a lot more help after that. AMEN!!!

The message today should help us to keep them, but also provide a foundation for all we do.

At this time of year there are adverts to have a lube change to prepare our cars for winter. Dirty oil clogs up the engine and can damage parts. New oil keeps every part lubricated and running smoothly. For the same reason, my question to us this morning is, have we had a lube change? Not to keep our cars in shape, but ourselves — body, soul and spirit. Have you ever flushed out your system with wine? We don't drink wine very often. In fact Lynne doesn't drink it at all. I occasionally enjoy a glass of wine for special occasions with a meal. NB. I am not recommending alcohol, and certainly not overindulgence and getting drunk.

Let's look at our Gospel reading. In the biblical times as described, wine was part of the hosts responsibility at a wedding. To run short was a great embarrassment. Mary asks Jesus to help - *they have no more wine*. Initially he is not that keen. - *why do you involve me?...My time has not yet come*. He is more concerned to follow his heavenly father's *kairos* time moment for revealing who he is, rather than his earthly mother's inclination, whose motives may have been questionable. "There's my boy, see what he can do," — something that many parents do. So what can we learn from this incident, which John describes as the first sign and miracle which Jesus did? All the events described by John are signs which point to a deeper meaning and reveal his glory. As we see, *the disciples put their faith in him*. This is the purpose of "signs" — to build our faith. This sign represents three things:

The Blood of Jesus cleanses

The water of the purification pots was used to cleanse outwardly. But what is needed to cleanse the inner soul? The Bible teaches that it is blood sacrifice. True relationship with God is based on a Covenant — do you remember what that means? At its most basic, it means a contract or agreement. Literally it means 'to cut by the shedding of blood.' Under the Old Covenant, animal blood sacrifice was needed on a continual basis. The New Covenant opened the once for all sacrifice of Jesus, and the introduction of wine here, is no coincidence. Jesus said, *Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life* (John 6:54). At the Last supper, he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to all of them saying, *drink from it all of you, for this is my blood of the new covenant,*

which is shed for many for the remission of sins. (Matthew 26:27,28) This is God's way that enables us as sinful people to enter into a personal relationship with him.

But the covenant is also the basis for all that we do, including our resolutions e.g.

. Worship - We can only enter into the presence of God through the blood of Jesus. We are made righteous by his atoning work on the cross, the covering of his blood. Otherwise we'd fry in our sin.

. Healing - and our health is rooted in this covenant relationship with God. We are heirs of all his promises, including shalom/peace and well being at every level. So for example, when someone is sick, we can receive healing through the blood of Jesus as covenant children. This is not the name it claim it formula kind of teaching, it is rooted in covenant relationship with a God who is incarnate as the Word become flesh, who acts and intervenes in our circumstances.

. Fellowship - We can only enter real fellowship through the blood of Jesus. Sin blocks *koionia* fellowship in the Spirit, but we can have fellowship in spite of ourselves through the blood of Jesus.

. Ministry - All our ministry needs to be cleansed through the blood of Jesus. Our motives, efforts, time, attitudes all need to be cleansed, redeemed by the blood of Jesus.

Every time take Holy Communion, we are receiving all the benefits of God's completed atoning work on the Cross, we receive all the benefits of the blood of Jesus, as represented by the wine. It flushes out our system. But there is something else needed - a fill up with someone, the Holy Spirit.

As we as churches consider our future, everything needs to be based on the cleansing blood of Jesus. We cannot change the past, but we can change how we are effected by it. In our process group, we are recognising that we need a fresh start. The way forward is to be cleansed by the blood of Jesus.

The Holy Spirit makes the difference

What effect does alcohol have on people, beside making them do really stupid things? It offers a feeling of elation and confidence, freedom from inhibition and fear. But it is superficial, transitory, and "impairs" one's abilities in harmful ways. As Christians, it is the Holy Spirit who gives that sense of exhilaration and power, rather than the temporary illusion of it, and without the effects of a hangover. The wine represents the enriching, exhilarating, transforming power of God, where Jesus takes our plain dull water pot offering, and turns it into a miraculous revelation of God's glory. On the day of Pentecost, people mistook the disciples encounter with the Holy Spirit, as an alcohol experience, and accused them of being drunk. Peter interprets, *These men are not drunk as you suppose. it is only 9 o'clock in the morning.* In fact he goes onto explain that they are full of the Holy Spirit, in fulfillment of the promises given by the prophet Joel (Acts 2:1f.). So here

we are at 10/11 o'clock in the morning. How many of us are drunk in the Spirit? How would we know? If anyone exhibited signs how would we react? Would we be amazed and perplexed? Or with fear, horror, mocking? Or would we be full of joy, praise, and want what they had?

The word baptism means to be fully immersed/ a new start. As we move into this new year, we all need a fresh baptism in the Holy Spirit. And if we come together as one church, I pray for a fresh corporate Baptism and infilling in the Holy Spirit.

Jesus way is better than the old way

The six water pots were used for purification rites in Judaism. One of the messages here is that the new way of Jesus is better than the old forms. Jesus draws the analogy of putting new wine into old wineskins: *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. No, he pours the new wine into the new wineskins* (Mark 2:22). Wine was kept in pouch containers made from animal skins to keep it cool. But as they got old and hardened, they could break and spill the wine. The principle is that the systems and forms are to be shaped by the new wine, rather than the other way around. I repeat, the new wine shape the wineskins, the forms, the systems, the habits, the opinions. We do not try and fit the new wine into our old hardened ways.

These old wine skins apply to any 'old ways' which we find hard to change — it may be our opinions, views, customs, traditions, forms, systems and ways. In fact it may be anything with which we have come too comfortable, familiar and rigid. This is not change for changes sake, but because following Jesus involves living in obedience to his will, and usually that involves repentance, which means change. Have any of you noticed that as one gets older change becomes harder.

The more we get used to those comfortable old slippers, the less do we see the need to change them. I have shared my shopping expertise with some of you before. I only go shopping for clothes every 5-10 years, and then it is to look for exact replacements. In fact, on the last expedition, which is probably about 5 years ago, I went back to the exact rack in the shoe department where I had found some shoes previously, and was shocked to find that the same shoe was no longer there. I know we get comfortable with what we are used to, and find it hard to change. We need a new wine change to change our lives. I can tell you that I have changed. I am living on the the wild side. I have now not only been, I have been twice - to Uptown. But please don't make me go again.

As we explore this relationship between COOL & CTK this is so important. We have to look at practical structural issues, and the report you will be receiving at the end of the month is an excellent document covering a lot of ground. But it has to be based on this principle, the new wine determines the form not the other way round. If we think it is just about continuing as usual with a few extra people, we'll

be disappointed. We are starting afresh and need new wine to form new wineskins.

How can we work with the Holy Spirit to change water into wine in our lives? I am just going to follow the directions of our Epistle, Ephesians 5:15-21. This could be a whole new sermon so I am simply going to pray these seven points:

1. Lord, help us to be *Be careful how we live* (v.15). We thank you for our covenant relationship with you our Lord and God. Lord help us to be careful, to watch how and where we walk. We give you the old wineskins of our habits thought patterns, customs and traditions in our daily walk, and ask you to fill us with new wine. Lord, let your wine mold, direct and lead us step by step.
2. Lord, may we *Make the most of every opportunity* (v.16). Take the old wineskins of how we spend and waste our time, redeem our time and fill our days with new wine opportunities.
3. Lord we want to *Understand your will* (v.17). Take the old wineskins of our thinking patterns, our weak wills, our self-important opinions. Fill us with new wine to transform and renew our minds with understanding, enable us to make the right decisions as we face choices, big and small. Lord, may our wills be aligned with yours.
4. Lord may we be daily *filled with the Holy Spirit* (v.18). Fill us with the new wine of your Holy Spirit. Saturate our spirits with your holy presence. Empower us to be your witnesses. Equip us with your gifts to fulfill your call and commission. May we know the life, joy, freedom, vitality, hope, faith and love of your new wine filling our innermost being.
5. Lord, as we offer *psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, as we Sing and make music in our hearts to you*, may they be a sweet fragrance that pleases you. (v. 19). Take the old wine skins of our worship. Free us from the rut of following forms and doing things the same way just for the sake of it. May we know the refreshing new wine of your spirit filling our hearts to worship you in the beauty of holiness. May we be released from our old wineskins of inhibition and trivial preoccupations. Open our mouths to praise you.
6. Lord help us to *give thanks always for all things* (v.20). Fill us with the new wine of grateful hearts that we may give thanks always, not just when it suits us, and for all things, not just the things we like.
7. Lord, we *submit to you and one another out of our fear and our reverence for you* (v 21). Lord let the old wineskins of our hardened attitudes be softened by the new wine of your Holy Spirit.

Lord we ask you to give us a new lube/oil/ wine change this new year.

May your new wine shape the wineskins, the forms, the systems, the habits, the opinions, the attitudes, the words, the worship of all our hearts. Re-baptise and fill us afresh with the Holy Spirit.