

Luke

See Jesus

Luke 5:33-39

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I. Repentance Isn't All About Behavior

The Pharisees were God-fearing, Jewish men who devoted their lives to steering the nation of Israel back to God. Their two major goals were preserving God's people as holy and preparing God's people for the coming Messiah.

They reduced God's law to manageable portions and by doing so, they actually undercut God's intent for giving us the law in the first place!

Somewhere along the way, keeping God's law became less about being acceptable and pleasing to God, and more about being an orderly and consistent society. They became infatuated with their watered down, manageable version of God's Law, and stopped teaching who God really is.

By the time Jesus arrived on the scene, Jewish life was largely governed by the sin-management systems, regulations, and traditions that the Pharisees organized, interpreted, and oversaw. It's these very systems and traditions that Jesus is threatening with His disruptive teachings! It's from these traditions and systems that Jesus is calling them to repent.

Luke 5:30 "And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, 'Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?'"

Luke 5:33 "And they said to Him, 'The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink.'"

By comparing Himself to the bridegroom (v 34), He's telling the Pharisees that He is what people have been fasting for, longing for, and waiting for all these centuries. He's not condemning them for fasting, but inviting them to change their paradigm. He's calling them to repent.

We tend to hear the word "repent" most often in the context of turning away from sin, but there is a second, maybe even more helpful way to obey the command to repent:

The Greek term "metanoia" is often translated "repent" and literally means "to change what you think." It's more than just switching between two equally good options. The kind of repentance that Jesus is talking about is a paradigm shift that makes you think about new things.

Repentance will certainly involve changed behavior, but it is definitely more than changed behavior. True repentance begins with humbly acknowledging that your worldview is woefully inadequate to fully embrace what God is really up to.

Romans 12:1-2 “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Our regular intake of Scripture is not optional or supplementary. Our regular intake of Scripture must be changing the way we think or else we will end up just like the Pharisees.

If we are attempting the *transformation* in Romans 2, but not the *renewal* in Romans 2, then we will miss the *repentance* in Luke 5 by as wide a margin as the Pharisees did!

II. Repentance is Turning Away From the Old

Jesus tells them that repentance means abandoning their old way of thinking.

Luke 5:36 “No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. If he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old.”

If we assume that Jesus is sticking with the message of “Repent! The Kingdom of God is here” then the garment being replaced is probably the systems and regulations the Pharisees promoted to help people manage their sin.

If we’re honest with ourselves, we are tempted to do the same exact thing as the Pharisees. We take all that Jesus is offering when he says “the Kingdom of God is available to you!” and we try to reduce it down to a manageable checklist.

III. Repentance is Making Room for the New

Jesus tells them that repentance is going to mean embracing a new way of thinking.

Luke 5:37-38 “And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed.³⁸ But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins.”

The systems and regulations that the Pharisees had put in place could never accommodate what God had planned for the world. They succeeded in making the world manageable, predictable, and relatively safe, but it was just too small.

It’s not surprising that the Pharisees struggled with this, as they had a lot to lose. Those systems and traditions gave them influence, purpose, status, and credibility.

IV. Repentance is the New “Normal”

We can embrace the new wine of the kingdom of God and the new wineskins of a renewed mind.

Jesus is saying now that the Kingdom of God is here; changing your thinking is the new normal.

The Kingdom of God will not stay inside your safe, comfortable, familiar life.