

The Groom, the Garment, and the Wineskin

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Well, take your Bibles this morning and let's go to the gospel of Mark. The gospel of Mark. I begin a, an intensive in our Pastor's Training Institute a week from tomorrow on 1 & 2 Timothy. The goal is 40 hours of instruction and it's just about to kill me. Uh, I have so much material and I'm looking very forward to it but it's a lot of work, so 2 Timothy didn't get ready but I want us to go back and look at Mark this morning and just feast on the wonders of Christ this morning.

In this context as always, he's, um, being confronted and, uh, there are attempts to undermine him by the Pharisees, that's the religious leaders of the day, and they feel like they've found something this time that he can't worm out of. They feel like they can discredit Christ and catch him in a fault, if you will, or at least diminish his reputation some and this is how the narrative goes. Mark 2:18-22,

18 John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they came and said to Him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" 19 And Jesus said to them, "While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. 21 No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results. 22 No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins as well; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."

I've simply entitled this exposition "The Groom, the Garment, and the Wineskin." The groom, the garment, and the wineskin. Probably or perhaps we should say it should be that the most exciting day of your life next to your conversion experience is your wedding day. Now that might rival the birth of a child perhaps but weddings are meant to be celebratory, they are meant to be festive, they are meant to be days of great happiness and great joy where in our, in our text today Jesus uses this analogy of a wedding to illustrate the joy that his disciples should have when they're with him.

Now in the context, he's talking about his disciples who are with him during his earthly ministry and how he's the groom, and that's the figure he likes to use of himself, he used lots of figures but that was one of those, "I'm the groom and My immediate associates, my 12 apostles, they're My attendants." And as he tells these Pharisees and John's disciples, "How can the attendants who, who are getting the wedding ceremony ready for the groom, how can they be mournful and sad and fasting? It's, it's the wrong time to fast." So it's a powerful and beautiful analogy but as I said, these, uh, enemies of our Lord, not John's disciples but the Pharisees, are trying to entrap him.

So I., notice the question to entrap. So they bring a question trying to entrap our Lord, again, to discredit him, to diminish him, to rob him or diminish him of some of his popularity because he was becoming quite popular. So in verse 18 it says and "John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting." Well, two very different groups here. The Pharisees were sticklers about the old covenant laws. They were legalists to the nth degree. Matter of fact, the Pharisees would make up laws and ordinances and rules that weren't even in the Bible and, by the way, this is one of those; they had some laws about fasting that God's word didn't require. But you see, their whole goal is to put forward the, uh, the image of superior spirituality, "We are more pious. We are more dedicated. We are more committed to our God than others so that's why we have more rules." And as a side note, church, let me caution you, as I have many times, be aware of that man or that lady who's always putting on additional rules in their lives, additional convictions to portray a superior spirituality. Now maybe there are folks who want to deny themselves things and dedicate themselves to the Lord but they don't wear it like a neon sign to proclaim it, typically they keep that very quiet and very private and they don't begrudge you if you have freedoms in those areas. But that's not the Pharisees, the Pharisees are all about how they look before men and so they had devised several days that they fasted and did things, and they made sure their hair was, uh, uh, disheveled and their, their countenance looked down and they looked like they were malnourished and they would go around so that people would say, "Oh, look at our Pharisees, how godly they are."

Well, that was one group, that's how they approached fasting and, by the way, the Old Testament only required fasting one day a year, on the great Day of Atonement. So they greatly exaggerated the biblical text in their self-imposed rules of fasting, again, to exalt themselves. But then the other group here that's mentioned is John's disciples. They had a pure motive. They were just, they were fasting because John had been imprisoned. Now you remember John the Baptist, John the Baptist living out in the wilderness and has camel hair for his clothing and he's eating grasshoppers for his food. Well, in his case, he, John the Baptist had that unique and special calling to be the herald of the, of the Christ. Uh, so when, when you look at a person like John the Baptist, sometimes young preachers get into this mode and they think, "I need to be like John the Baptist." Well, in some ways you do but not hiding out into the wilderness and eating grasshoppers and wearing camel skin coats. That's not what God wants for you. We tend to forget that God has special tasks for special men and it's a one-time thing. One size doesn't fit all. But John's been arrested. He, uh, as you'll remember the story, he called out Herod for having his brother's wife and he did it in public, he was kind of a man's man about that and just boldly proclaimed God's truth to Herod and, of course, Herod has him, uh, arrested and

then ultimately beheaded. So John's disciples had a good reason to fast. There are times and places to fast and seek the Lord because the burden is so great and these men are obviously burdened, their leader has been taken away from them and taken away with evil motives.

So you have the Pharisees with their secret motives to try to entrap and to promote their own spirituality, that's why they're fasting, and then John's disciples who are sincere having lost John to imprisonment. Now in Matthew's gospel, it tells us that it's John's disciples who actually ask the question. It's John's disciples who actually say to Jesus and his disciples, "Why do we fast and why do the Pharisees fast but, Jesus, Your disciples don't fast?" It's as if to say, "Why aren't you guys as dedicated as we are? Why aren't you as sold out as we are to serve the Lord and to serve His causes?"

Now Jesus had endorsed the ministry of John the Baptist and the people all knew this, so that's why the Pharisees are licking their chops, that's why the Pharisees are thinking, "We think we can trap Him here because He's already commended John and his followers and their, they have a discipline about serving the Lord that His own followers don't say." Really what the Pharisees wanted Jesus to do is put his hat in his hand and come up sheepishly before them and say, "We're, we're just not as committed as you guys are." That's what they were looking for, any way to put him down or diminish him. You see, they're all about power and control and Jesus was starting to get a lot of esteem among the people and so they're trying to diminish it. So they think they've got a, an angle here working through John's disciples to expose Jesus as being insincere or at least discredit him as being inconsistent in his discipleship or his piety.

So it reminds us today, I mean, you don't have to look at politics very often to find those who have no character and no credibility and they try to use others who have character and credibility to advance their own cause. Again, the Pharisees are coming from that place of, that foundational area, era, rather, of pride wanting their lust for power and control, and they are those who use the Scriptures often but they don't use the Scriptures for personal godliness but to support their positions of authority and their traditions and Jesus' popularity is becoming a big threat to them. So they had no scriptural foundation to discredit Jesus so they tried to manipulate the situation and use the honorable credible disciples of John to prove that Jesus was doing something wrong here by not fasting as much as others were.

Now really even the disciples of John had no basis for asking this question because had they known the Old Testament, they would know there's only one day, the Day of Atonement, that's required to fast anyway, so they're somewhat out of line even though I think their heart, excuse me, their heart and motives are pure. Um, just a word on fasting. I think if you boil down fasting to its, uh, simplest, uh, denominator, fasting is meant to draw near to God. Fasting is meant to kindle afresh a love and a closeness to God and the Old Testament prophets taught that it's not just the act of not eating that's important, it's the heart that draws near to God that's important. Uh, I remember a fellow when I was in high school, I, I assume he was a Christian, and he would fast for like 30 and 40 days at a time. I didn't know, know him well, I didn't know much about the situation but I'd often

wonder what he'd, why he did that and may, maybe his motives were pure, I do not know, but just doing the outward activity of denying yourself food does not mean your heart is drawing near to God. Now often they'll go together. There's a righteous fasting where someone just feels burdened and they want to draw near to God, but that should be your call under grace as God leads you. And by the way, if you're burdened and fasting and seeking the Lord, you can't expect the other 8-900, uh, church members to all join in and be burdened with you that week; we're just too large for that, amen? They're not unspiritual if they don't join in on the fast with you is what I'm saying. So let's not judge one another in these areas, and we never have, I just want to throw that out as we're talking about fasting.

Well, that was the question to entrap, "Why do John's disciples fast? The Pharisees are fasting, i.e. we look dedicated and committed by Your disciples, Jesus, why, they look like they're halfway having a party most of the time, what's the problem here?" Well, here's the answer, I call it the answer that confounds and his answers always confounded these guys because he had wisdom they did not have. He gives his answer and in giving his answer he uses three illustrations, three metaphors, you might say. He, he uses a, a wedding and a feast; uh, he uses a garment; and he uses a wineskin. So let's talk about these.

First of all, a wedding feast. Look at verses 19 and 20 again, "And Jesus said to them," answering about why his disciples aren't fasting, "While the bridegroom," and that's him speaking of himself. I don't like to use the word bridegroom because in my mind I get mixed up like groomsmen and bridesmaids, but this is the groom that's called the bridegroom in the Bible but the groom, "While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they?" Of course they knew the custom of the day. That would be unthinkable, I mean, that would be the greatest disservice; you'd be throwing cold water on your best friend's wedding ceremony if you were the attendant, the bridegroom's attendants and you were all mourning and fasting instead of celebrating and helping with the festivities. So Jesus says, "You can't do that." Last phrase of verse 19, "So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast." So even at this point he's silencing his critics and we remind ourselves that throughout the Scriptures the relationship between Christ and his church, his people, is often symbolized by the relationship of a bride and a groom. There's a lot of reasons for that but none more important than the, the intimacy and the love and the oneness of a bride and a groom that, that they're brought together as two separate ones but there's this mystical oneness. Well, so it is with Christ and his church. We come together in him, we are one with him but there's a mystical element. We can't see it with our eyes or hear it with our ears or touch it with our hands, but we know we're one with him and it's just gonna get better and better, by the way. And that's the way marriage should work also, a bride and a groom as they grow through the ups and downs and the ins and outs and the difficult times and the bad times, and for some, "I'm gonna leave," but you didn't leave and, and then God blesses and things get richer and sweeter and more special as time goes on. Well, that's the way our relationship with the Lord is. So there are many ways in which the relationship of a human bride and groom parallels the relationship of Christ with his people.

A couple of verses here, one from the Old Testament, Isaiah 62:5, "For as a young man marries a virgin, So your sons will marry me," this is God talking, "And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So your God will rejoice over you." And then also in Ephesians 5, um, 31 and 32, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great," this, these two people becoming one flesh, bride and groom, "but," he says, "I am speaking in reference to Christ and to the church." Again, using that analogy to picture the relationship of Christ to his church.

So twice Jesus says this cannot be. I mean, you can't take the attendants of the groom and, and while they're with the groom and they're supposed to be rejoicing in, in the ancient Jewish wedding custom there would be singing, there would be feasting, there would be celebration, not a solemn fast. Matter of fact, the attendants of the groom were responsible for the arrangements of the betrothal and the wedding itself. They're expected to do everything to promote the festivities. So Jesus is saying to these guys, "You guys are totally backwards. The groom is here. The attendants should be about the festivities and the joy of being with him, not mournfully separating off to some cave somewhere and fasting or something. It's just not time for that." You see, the Christian life is not a funeral, it's more of a wedding feast. It's not a dirge, it's more of a celebration. Now in balance there are times for that in Christ, we'll point that out in just a moment.

Now John had already actually announced that Jesus was the bridegroom; in John 3:29 he says, "He who has the bride is the bridegroom," that's Jesus has his bride, the church, "but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full." John the Baptist himself says, "I'm one of the attendants of the bridegroom." That's what he's saying, "And I see the groom has made it. Now we can get on with the ceremony and the festivities of this glorious and holy and joyous event."

As you think about it, Christianity and the commitment of marriage, uh, really do harmonize with the relationship we have with Christ. First of all, in a marriage ceremony you have to say "I do," and to become a Christian, in effect you say "I do" to Jesus Christ. I do. Matter of fact, when you say "I do," you don't just say "I'm adding this on," you're, you're, a bride says "I do," she takes a whole new name, takes a whole new role. Uh, you bear the, the, the groom's name, you bear his reputation and that's what we do after we say "I do," we become his witnesses bearing his name in the world. You share his wealth and his power, his love and his protection. I, I, I'm one that, um, I haven't moved one half of one millimeter on my convictions about the biblical roles of husband and wife and men and women in this culture. You know why? Because God hadn't moved. The world can go to hell all they want, we're not going to follow them there. This horrible evil in, in Texas, Uvalde, Texas, this, this vile wicked man destroying, assassinating these precious children and let's pray for these folks. Can you imagine the, the, the trauma they're all going through there but, folks, if we get the church back right and the home back right, we wouldn't be having this stuff. That's the, that's the solution. That's the basis of the problem. You can remove all of the artifacts of destruction you want to out of a culture's

hands, they'll still find a way to hate, they'll still find a way to kill and destroy if the heart's not right.

I remember an illustration I heard one time in, in South Africa. There was a, a, a lot of these villages that were around one of the, the large game reserves and they never had trouble with the elephants but the elephants were beginning to rampage through some of the villages and that just hadn't happened before, and the biologists began to study the situation and they found out something, they found out the actual elephants that were rampaging those villages were young bulls, immature bulls, and they had separated from the older bulls, and they found out when they got them, they herded them all back together again and the problem stopped. We need some dads, we need some fathers, we need some pastors to keeps, keep the young bulls in line.

This isn't hard but we've got a godless culture that's decided everything the Bible teaches must be opposed, undermined and removed from our culture so you can't have marriage of a man and a woman, you can't have mom and dad staying together, you can't have a commitment of love that lasts a lifetime, and by the way, every statistic shows that when that's the case, delinquency and problem children, the, the incidence of that goes way way down. Well, I'm kind of chasing a rabbit there.

But we come together as husband and wife, as bride and groom, and it pictures the relationship of Christ and his church because now we are one with him and we have his wealth, we know his power, we enjoy his love, and we have his protection. He said, "Behold, I'm with you always." But also when you get married, you don't go back to your home. I remember an older lady in the church years ago and she said, "You know, the one thing I remembered about my wedding day was I didn't go home. I went to his home." Well, in the ancient world, the, the groom took his bride to his father's house and that's exactly what our groom's gonna do with us, his bride. We're going to the Father's house. So there are beautiful and powerful parallels.

Biblical fasting is important, it's not commanded in any specific way or any specific amount but it has its place, but fasting is so you can be near to God and draw close to God but this was not a time for fasting, this was a time for feasting and that should be our norm as Christians. This wasn't, wasn't a time for mourning, this was a time for celebrating and that's what Jesus was pointing out, especially during his Incarnate years on the earth because why would you mourn for the groom when he's right there with you?

So while the attendants of the groom were to be rejoiceful and this is directly addressed to them, uh, we, we remind ourselves that we are all the attendants of the bridegroom, we're all about getting the bride ready for the day when the groom returns. The attendants was under the instruction of the groom's father to seek out the bride, and at this point it was very common they would pay a dowry at that point. So the father would take the initiative, he'd make arrangement with the girl's father, and while the, the groom was still a baby boy and the bride was still a baby girl, very often the attendants would be in, in, in service to help secure the dowry; not saying absolute but that was a common thing in this

day. And that's exactly what happened in our Lord's ministry to us. He came on the cross and paid the dowry because once it was paid and once it was established, it was just a matter of time before bride and groom were brought together as they grew up and came of age. So there was a lot of work for the attendants to do, the attendants of the groom, busy preparing everything and we, the bride, are still his attendants and we're still coming to maturity and we'll continue this process until the Father says it's time.

Well, look at verse 20 now. In balance, Jesus says, verse 19, the attendants cannot fast while the groom is with them, verse 20, "But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day." Now he says it two different ways. He said, "There are days," plural, "coming when I, the groom, will be taken away from them and that'd be a time to fast, and they'll certainly fast on that day." Now I think the plural "days" must refer to Jesus' arrest, his betrayal by Judas, him being pulled away and into the, the trial and the, the mockery and all that was involved. And then "that day" would refer to the crucifixion when they nailed our Lord to the cross and he died. And of course, we know from the biblical text what a horrifying event this was for the disciples. Now think about it for a moment, these men had left everything to follow Jesus and Jesus said, "There's a time..." Now he didn't mean, "I'd actually be away from them," but as far as they understood, "In the physical realm I was taken away from them." He said, "When that day comes, that's a day that they will fast."

So there are times for fasting in the here-and-now and in this world because we face the world, the flesh, and the devil that tries to work against us and undermine us and sever us in our intimacy with Christ, but fasting is not our norm. The attitude of one saved is one of joy and gladness, not of mourning or of sadness. Matter of fact, um, when Jesus came, this very spirit of joy was announced by the angel to Joseph. Luke 2:10, "But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people.'" So Christ brings good news of great joy. Now it's maybe some news but it's not great joy unless you grasp your sin issue, unless you see the depth of your need of forgiveness, unless you grasp something of the woeful offensiveness we have before a holy God, and that takes the work of the Holy Spirit.

So here the Jews are. Now generally the Jews had two things going on, the Jewish religious authorities. 1. Can we discredit, disqualify and get rid of this guy? Well, increasingly they found out that wasn't gonna work because every time they tried to discredit him was something like this, he just came back and demolished their argument. So the Jews begin to try a synchronizing or a syncretizing of their old law with Jesus Christ, "Maybe we can just kind of piece these together," and, um, Jesus says, "That don't work either. Number 1, I've told you you can't expect the attendants of the groom to be mournful when the groom's with them and the wedding's about at hand. And secondly, I'm telling you you cannot connect Me with anything else that's ever existed. It won't work." So he says it this way, verse 21, "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results."

Now when I was a little boy, everybody in my school wore the old style Levi's. You know why we wore the old style Levi's? Because there was nothing else to wear. There wasn't three styles or 12 styles or 15, you just bought the old cotton Levi's. But my mother was always careful to buy them an inch or two larger in waist and length than I needed because you washed them one time and, buddy, they shrunk up. Well, that's what Jesus is talking about here. If you take a new patch, a cotton patch that's never shrunk, and you sew it on an old piece of cloth, well, that cloth has already done it's shrinking while the new patch when you wash it is gonna shrink and it's gonna pull away and the tear and the hole at the end will be worse than at the beginning. What's Jesus' point here? Jesus' point is, "You guys think that somehow, someway you're gonna mold Me into your human philosophy, your man-made religion, but it will not work."

Here's the thing you have to understand about Jesus and that is the only-ness of Jesus, the only-ness of Jesus. "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but by Me. I'm the only One. It's not Me plus Judaism. It's not Me plus works. It's not Me plus the law. That's putting an unshrunk patch on a shrunken pair of pants." Of course, in that day those ladies and those men would have known exactly what that means. You cannot combine Jesus with any teaching or any philosophy. You cannot add Jesus to Judaism. You cannot look at Jesus as another room in the house of religion. He's not one of many ways. He is the only way. What he's saying is, "I, I'm, I'm new and I'm complete. I brought something new and something wholly complete and there's no room for nothing else to be added to Me."

Jesus doesn't just become a new room in the house of religion, he's the whole new house anchored on a whole new immovable foundation. You cannot piece him into your life either. You cannot put the patch of Christianity on your tattered life. You gotta become new. Jesus isn't interested in fixing up the old you. Jesus wants to bring a new you to you, the new birth, the new life. You're born again. You're created in Christ Jesus, the Bible says. Don't try to mix him with anything. And haven't we Baptist and Evangelicals over the last several decades gone clamoring after every cute, clever, fun thing that the culture floats by and try to kinda synchronize that with Jesus, bring it into the church, and that'll help us win more for Jesus. Have you looked at the state of our churches today? Have you looked at the condition of the church today? You know why? Look, when you add anything to Jesus, Jesus leaves. You add anything to Jesus, he walks out the door. He has no rivals. He tolerates no additives.

Well, in the sense of Jesus saying to these guys, "I've told you something about Me being the groom and My, My disciples being My attendants and they need to rejoice while they're with Me because this thing's all new. I'm here and it's all new. It's new like a, and you can't add it to the old like you can't put an unshrunk cloth on an old garment." But then secondly in verse 22, the wineskin, "No one puts new wine into an old wineskin; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins as well; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins." I think the context is the old Mosaic economy was decaying and it was fading away. Matter of fact, the old covenant, the old Judaism was supposed to decay and fade away.

Listen to this, Hebrews 8:13, "When He said, 'A new covenant,'" now that's Christ, Jesus is the new covenant, "He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old and ready to disappear." Now that was a staggering truth to the Jews of this day. "We've got to abandon, die, discard, throw away everything our forefathers taught us about the law and embrace this Christ?" And here's what Jesus says, "Yes, because it, if you pour the new wine of Me into an old dried wineskin, there's life in Me," and we see that in the figure of the wine fermenting, it's alive, there's yeast that's alive in there and it starts expanding, "and that old wineskin being old and brittle and dry is just gonna burst and you ruin the wineskin and you lose the wine." And that, I think that's a great word for a lot of people in our culture today who've added Jesus onto their life as their ticket into heaven. It won't work. He's going to burst everything else and you're not gonna get him either. You don't add Jesus on, you come to Jesus dead in trespasses and sins and say, "Give me new life, a new life with You and for You."

So the Bible teaches that the old Judaistic covenant law system was fading away, in Christ it's become obsolete, but, but it's not that it was bad. You see, there's two ways to destroy something: you can smash it or you can fulfill it. And that's what Jesus was doing, he was fulfilling all the law and all the prophets, they're all summed up in him. So you don't look at them anymore, you look at him from now on. So Jesus destroyed, if you will, did away with, made obsolete the old covenant, the old wineskin by fulfilling the law in his life and in his death. He established a new covenant in his blood.

Now when Moses went up on Mount Sinai and Moses received the law, the Bible says Moses got tablets written by the finger of God. The old covenant, the old system was written in stone by the finger of God but the new covenant is written with the blood of God, Jesus Christ dying on the cross. And in the old covenant, the law was on stone but now in the new covenant it's written in our hearts and not on stone. Matter of fact, Hebrews 10:16 tells us, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days," after that first covenant, "I will put My laws upon their heart, and on their minds I will write them."

Sometimes they're discussing them among pastors, "How you gonna get people to come and how you gonna get people to serve the Lord, and how you gonna get them just to believe the Bible's sufficient and that's enough?" I'm not. I can't. The Spirit of God must write it on your heart and put it in your mind, and then when I proclaim it from here you think, "Aha, that's true. That resonates with what's been put in my heart. That resonates it's what God's put in my mind at the new birth. So while I struggle with it at times, I'm not as faithful as I ought to be, I cannot separate from the truth I'm getting from my pulpit at church." And if God has not written it in your hearts, if God has not put it in your minds, there's no amount of shenanigans, charisma, creative things, newfangled things I can possibly do to get you to love Christ and his truth. Are you with me, church? It takes the power of the Holy Spirit to build a church and I'm thankful I get to taste that and experience that, and it's not that common.

In the old covenant, you functioned in the power of the flesh trying to keep the law. In this new covenant, the law is fulfilled and righteousness is established by him for you. By

him for you. Romans 8:1-4, listen, look, I think it'll be on your screen. Romans 8:1-4, "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." No. No condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh," he says, "Think of all the good the law could do in the power of your flesh and it couldn't do much, couldn't do anything, couldn't make you righteous." Last part, second part of verse 3, "God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." Once you're born again and your trust is in Jesus, he is my righteousness, he is the one who makes me clean and acceptable before God. I don't add anything to him. He alone. And therefore God looks at me in Christ Jesus as I have obtained – listen to me – the righteousness of the law, yes, but more than that, even the righteousness of his Son Jesus Christ and that's the greatest righteousness of all.

Well, so Jesus gives an answer that confounds them. He talks about a feast and how attendants of the groom have to be celebrating, it's no time for fasting when the groom's here. And then he talked about a garment, he said, "You guys are so prone to think that I'm just another prophet, I'm another good teacher, and you just add Me into your other good teachers and prophets and rules and religions you're trying to observe. No! That's all obsolete. You try to patch Me on, it'd be liking putting a, an unshrunk cloth on an old garment and when the new unshrunk cloth shrinks it's gonna tear a big hole. It's not gonna work. It's like putting new wine into an old, brittle, hard wineskin. It's not gonna work, that wine's gonna expand, it's gonna burst. I am new and I'm complete all by Myself and that's what you must embrace."

Now circling the field, I, I thought about this a little bit and I thought since the Lord started with the image of a husband and wife, particularly a bride and a groom and how that parallels Jesus, the groom, with his bride, the church, I thought of several other things that I thought were interesting to talk about and that's in the ancient Jewish wedding custom. It was the attendants of the groom who would go representing the groom to the bride and they would bring an oath from the groom. So they're bringing an oath and, and they're, they're coming and saying and the parallel is that's what the attendants do today. We bring an oath from the groom, if you'll believe on him, he'll save you. If you'll trust in him, you can be his bride. That's why Paul said we are ambassadors for Christ. We're his attendants and his representatives to bring you the oath. The groom has said, "I request you to be My bride." If you will take his word, you can become his.

Also, the attendants would give gifts to the bride. They'd come and saying the groom is, loves you, he, he wants you to be his and he comes bringing you these gifts, and when we receive Christ as our Savior, we receive spiritual gifts and blessings and the gift of forgiveness of sins, and the gift of new life, and the gift of the promise of eternal life.

And then there's the act of betrothal. It was a celebration. It was a feast and the bride and the groom would come together at that time but the bride's veil would remain because it's only the betrothal period, it's only the period of engagement so she had a veil. And that's

the way we are today. The Bible says right now we know our groom and we are his bride but we see through a glass dimly right now. It's not face-to-face yet but he's still ours and he's still with us but the veil is there.

And then when the father in this day gave the word to the groom, the groom would go to the bride's house with the attendants and the marriage ceremony would take place. Then he would bring his bride back to the father's house and that's why Jesus said, "I'm going away to prepare a place for you. In My Father's house are many dwelling rooms and I've got, I've got a house big enough for," I hate to say it this way, "for a great big bride." Lot of, lot of folks are gonna make up this bride and Jesus said, "I've got a house, I've got a place at My Father's house big enough for all of you."

And then, finally, the marriage is consummated and the bride's veil is removed. One, one thing first, I got ahead of myself. When the wedding ceremony was taking place, the attendants would come and put the wedding robes, the white beautiful robes that would be for the wedding ceremony only. Doesn't that typify that we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ? We wear those robes of righteousness. Matter of fact, um, I'm sorry about my voice. Revelation 7:14, "I said to him, 'My lord, you know.' And he said to me, 'These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'" And then after the ceremony, the veil is lifted. Revelation 21:1 and 2, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God," the Father, "made ready as a bride adorned for her husband." That glorious, celebratory, feasting, joyous, celebrated time when finally perfected and purified the bride will be home with the groom forever.

Now my word to you this morning, Jesus said, "I, I'm bringing something new and it's complete." Are you complete in him? Are you complete in him? Not, "I'm trying this. I'm working at that. I'm thinking it through." No, no, no, are you at rest by just saying, "It's You, Christ. I trust You to cover all my deficiencies, all my weaknesses, all my sins, all my failures." Are you complete in him? The old songwriter wrote, "And when before the throne I stand," I love this phrase, "I stand in Him complete." It's as, as if the angel at the gate says, "Why are you getting into heaven?" Because I'm complete in him. As I said Easter Sunday, the, the thief on the cross when they asked him why should you get into heaven, he said, "I don't know. The man on the middle cross said I could come." I'm complete in him. Are you complete? You'd better not, you'd better not leave my ministry and go to heaven with anything, anything in your heart or in your, your understanding other than, "Christ and Christ alone is my hope." And I'm telling you, if you say that at the gates of heaven, those gates will swing open wide because that's enough. You'll need nothing else but him. Nothing else but him.