

We have been reading through the gospel of Mark. Last week we skipped into chapter 6 but today we return to chapter two. Just prior to our reading we have the healing story of the four men who bring their friend to Jesus for healing and they can't get into the house. So the four friends carry their friend up to the roof where they remove the roof and lower him from above down to Jesus.

Then Jesus calls Levi, the tax collector to be his follower and Jesus is criticized for eating with the tax collectors and sinners. And then Jesus' disciples are criticized because they are not fasting like the followers of John the Baptist are doing. So what we see is a series of actions in which Jesus and his followers break new ground in the way that they are to live their lives. After all of these events we then hear Jesus say this found in Mark 2:21-22.

Read Mark 2: 21-22

Some of you know that I spent part of my vacation a couple of weeks ago helping James paint his room. James has been asking his parents for some time now to paint his room. Now there was nothing wrong with the paint on James' walls. There was no paint peeling off the walls. The coat we put on 8 years ago was doing very well. But what James did not like was how across the top of the walls of his room were painted the words to the children's book "Good Night Moon." James seemed to think that now that he was 8 he was too old to have "Good Night Moon" painted on his walls.

So James and I with help from Mary Kathryn changed the color of his walls. Now you no longer find the light blue walls with the words of "Good Night Moon" written across the top of the walls. Now you find a rich coffee color and no words. A couple of posters still have to be hung but James is quite happy that his room has been transformed. And Mom is quite happy that the three of us painted those walls and did not spill anything on the carpet and bed spread. And I know that many of you are shocked that I could actually produce a pretty good paint job. You must come by to see it.

Before we began this project, there were two questions we had to ask. We had to ask: what needed to be kept as it was and what needed to be changed. For the room, there was very little that had to be changed or created. We kept the same furniture in the same locations. Nothing drastic there. All we felt was needed was new paint on the walls. But James will tell you that this new paint has made all the difference in the way he feels about his room.

We are reading through the gospel and Mark and this morning we have returned to chapter 2. Here we have read what amounts to a proverb by Jesus. “No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak because it doesn’t work very well and actually makes the tear worse. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins because the new wine will burst the old wineskins. One must put new wine into new wineskins.”

So this question leads us to ask two questions about our life and the life of our church: What needs to be created or changed and what needs to remain as it is?

As you examine your own life, what do you believe is good in you that needs to be affirmed? Is it a certain gift that you possess? Is it a certain relationship that is important to you? Is it a particular attitude? What about you is special that you need to nurture? Each one of us is special and unique and we need to appreciate the good things about ourselves.

But as you and I examine our lives, we also need to question what in our lives do we need to change? Is there something that you are doing that is harmful to your relationship with God? Is there something that you are engaged in that is destructive to you or to another? If you don’t know, then maybe you need to seek out the opinion of another. It may be an attitude, it may be an action, it may be an addiction, it may be certain behaviors. What do you need to remove or change in your life?

This question can also be posed to us as a church. What are core values that we need to affirm and what are some ways we need to change? What are we holding onto that are really old wineskins that need to be discarded? The church of yesterday no longer works in our society today. We must be visionaries who aren't focused on gathering together but being sent out into the world.

We have been praying over what is one new endeavor that we as a church are called by God to undertake. As we move in this direction, we are in fact looking for the new wineskins that are needed to carry out the will of God on earth.
AMEN.