

Main text: Luke 5:33-39 (Setting the Context) Isaiah 43: 18-21

Sermon Title: "Something New from Jesus"

"This sermon is about Jesus introducing a new way of thinking that was contrary to Jewish beliefs in the community.

Jesus Questioned About Fasting

³³ They said to him, "John's disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking."

³⁴ Jesus answered, "Can you make the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? ³⁵ But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast."

³⁶ He told them this parable: "No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. ³⁷ And 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. ³⁸ No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. ³⁹ And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, 'The old is better.' "

What is the true nature of fasting?

Christianity

The "acceptable fast" is discussed in the biblical Book of [Isaiah](#), chapter 58:3-7. In essence, it means afflict the soul through

abstaining from fulfilling the needs or wants of the flesh. The opening chapter of the [Book of Daniel](#), vv. 8-16, describes a partial fast and its effects on the health of its observers.

Fasting is a practice in several [Christian denominations](#) or other churches. Some denominations do not practice it, considering it an external observance, but many individual believers choose to observe fasts at various times at their own behest. The [Lenten](#) fast observed in the [Catholic Church](#) and the [Eastern Orthodox Church](#) is a forty-day partial fast to commemorate the fast observed by [Christ](#) during his temptation in the desert. This is similar to the partial fasting within the [Ethiopian Orthodox Church](#) (abstaining from meat and milk) which takes place during certain times of the year and lasts for weeks.

Biblical accounts of fasting

- [Moses](#) fasted for forty days and forty nights, twice back-to-back, without food or water; the first, immediately before he received the tablets on the mountain with God. And the second, after coming down, seeing the Israelites practicing idolatry, and breaking the tablets in anger. ([Deuteronomy 9:7-21](#))
- [King David](#) fasted when the son of his adulterous union with [Bathsheba](#) was struck sick by God, in punishment for the adultery and for David's murder of Bathsheba's husband, [Uriah the Hittite](#). Nevertheless, the son died, upon which David broke his fast ([2 Samuel 12:15-25](#)).
- King [Jehoshaphat](#) proclaimed a fast throughout [Judah](#) for victory over the Moabites and Ammonites who were attacking them ([2 Chronicles 20:3](#)).
- The prophet [Joel](#) called for a fast to avert the judgment of God.

- The people of [Nineveh](#), in response to [Jonah](#)'s prophecy, fasted to avert the judgment of God ([Jonah 3:7](#)).
- The [Jews of Persia](#), following [Mordechai](#)'s example, fasted because of the [genocidal](#) decree of [Haman](#). [Queen Esther](#) declared a three-day fast for all the Jews prior to risking her life in visiting King [Ahasuerus](#) uninvited ([Esther 4](#)).
- Saul, later [Paul](#), did not eat or drink anything for three days after he converted on the road to Damascus.
- Jesus fasted for forty days and forty nights [while in the desert](#), being tempted by Satan to turn stones into bread and eat them, among other temptations. ([Matthew 4:2](#), [Luke 4:2](#)).
- The prophetess [Anna](#), who proclaimed the baby Jesus to be the Messiah, prayed and fasted regularly in the Temple ([Luke 2:37](#)).
- There are indications in the [New Testament](#) as well as from the [Didache](#) that members of an [Early Christian](#) Church fasted regularly.
- Jesus teaches on the outward appearance and demeanor of a fasting person ([Matthew 6:16](#)). It is also an assumed action of the believer (see: "And when you pray..." [Matthew 6:5](#) - "When you fast..." [Matthew 6:16](#))
- David used fasting as an act of humbling his soul ([Psalm 35:13](#)).
- The church in Antioch were worshipping the Lord and fasting when the Holy Spirit told them to send Barnabas and Saul for work ([Acts 13:2](#)).
- Paul and Barnabus appointed elders with prayer and fasting ([Acts 14:23](#)).
- Christians also believe fasting should be between yourself and God and should not be boasted about.

Biblical teaching on fasting

- The prophet [Isaiah](#) chastised the Israelites in [Isaiah 58](#) for the unrighteous methods and motives of their fasting. He clarified some of the best reasons for fasting and listed both physical and spiritual benefits that would result ([Isaiah 58:3-13](#)).
- Jesus warned his followers against fasting only to make others admire them. He provided practical steps on how to [fast in private](#). ([Matthew 6:16-18](#)).
- The [Pharisees](#) in [Jesus'](#) time fasted regularly and asked Jesus why his [disciples](#) did not. Jesus answered them using a parable ([Matthew 9:14-15](#), [Mark 2:18-20](#), [Luke 5:33-39](#), see also [Mark 2](#)).
- In some manuscripts Jesus ascribes the Disciples' inability to cast out spirits to a lack of prayer and fasting. ([Mark 9:29](#)) These, however, are later manuscripts and the words "and fasting" are omitted from many modern translations.

Questions for reflection and discussion:

1. Why did the Pharisees question Jesus about fasting?
2. Why were the Pharisees upset with Jesus? How did he challenge their thinking?
3. Read verse 36 and explain what Jesus meant in regards to a new garment.
4. What are wineskins and how were they used?

Digging Deeper: What was the new wine Jesus was talking about?

Prayer Focus: Dear God.....help me to be find newness of life in Jesus each day.