

## HE SAID WHAT?!?!

Title: Part 3 – “Stuck on Comfortable”

Date: April 26, 2026

While everyone here in the house is saying “Hi” I want to take a second to welcome everyone joining us online or on our app, we consider you a part of our family so let us know how we can pray for you or serve you. AND if this message blesses you consider sharing it with a friend.

Today we will be celebrating baptism as we also celebrate our churches 20th birthday AND yes there is cake! But before we get to that, if you have a Bible with you or on your phone, we're going to be in Luke chapter 5. If you don't have a Bible, no worries, we will put everything on the screens. But as we read the words of Jesus in Luke 5, let's let them sit with us for a second, amen? There is something powerful I believe about publicly reading God's Word if we don't rush through it. So, here is what doctor Luke writes beginning in verse 33:

<sup>33</sup> 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.” <sup>34</sup> Jesus answered, “Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? <sup>35</sup> But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast.” <sup>36</sup> He told them this parable: “No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. <sup>37</sup> And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. <sup>38</sup> No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. <sup>39</sup> And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say, **“THE OLD IS BETTER.”**”

If you are just jumping in with us today, we are in week 3 of a collection of messages called “He Said What?” which is all about meeting the real Jesus in His own words.

Week 1, we asked the question Jesus asked: **“Who do you say I am?”** And we said that's the only question that really matters, right? Everyone has to ultimately answer that question for themselves.

Week 2, Jesus said this totally audacious thing, He said, **“Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.”** Talking about God! That's pretty audacious for someone to say, right? But what this means is we can take our often-distorted picture of God and correct it if we just look at Jesus. If we look at how we lived and acted and treated people we can get a true picture of the nature and character of God.

If you missed either of the opening weeks you can get caught up on our app or website, BUT if Jesus is who He says He is—the Messiah, the Son of the living God—and if God really looks like what we see in Jesus— more compassionate, more present, more beautiful than we imagined—then the obvious next question is: *why don't we experience more of Him?* Why are so many of us stuck? Why does our faith feel stale? Why do we keep going through the motions Sunday after Sunday, but nothing really changes Monday through Saturday?

I think if most Christians were honest, and I mean gut-level honest, not Instagram honest, they would admit that their faith feels more like a routine than a relationship. They know the right answers. They go to the right places. They check the right boxes. But the fire is out. There's no hunger. There's no edge to it. It's... and here is the word, **comfortable**. Everyone say, “comfortable.”

You ever talk to someone who's been married for a long time about their marriage, hoping you can gain some insight into how to make yours better, and as you sit and listen you hear a lot of things like: It's fine. Not great. Not awful. It's functional. Predictable. Comfortable. And you think to yourself, “That sounds... awful!” That's what a lot of people's faith has become. Fine. Functional. Comfortable. And absolutely nothing like the abundant life Jesus promised.

BUT the good news today is Jesus diagnoses that exact problem in the passage we just read. And His diagnosis isn't rebellion. It's not atheism. It's not even what we'd typically call “sin.” It's something way more subtle than any of those.

Today I want to preach a message I am calling:

## **Stuck on Comfortable**

SO, a few weeks ago during my quiet time, and no that is not where Cheryl puts me when I act up. A quiet time is a word for a practice friends of Jesus have done for centuries. It has various forms and people do it for various lengths of time, but at its core it is a time you set aside—often in the morning—to get quiet, read Scripture and pray. Anyone who has ever done anything significant for Jesus, this was a foundational practice in their life.

But during my quiet time, I was reading in Luke 5 that we read today, and I stumbled upon something that sparked the idea for this entire collection of messages BECAUSE, I honestly almost skipped over this little one liner from Jesus in verse 39. I mean, I've read the wineskins parable a hundred times. New wine, old wineskins, don't mix them, got it. Check. Moving on. I was about to flip to chapter 6 when something made me stop. I went back and read verse 39 one more time:

<sup>39</sup> And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say, “**THE OLD IS BETTER.**”

And I sat there staring at it going, “Wait. What is Jesus saying here?” Because for years I just lumped this verse in with the wineskins illustration and moved on. But when I actually slowed down and looked at it, I realized Jesus is doing something in verse 39 that I had completely missed. And when it hit me, it was so convicting. Not like I’m a bad person, more like a light bulb flickering on.

AND this ties into the whole stuck on comfortable thing and the flame going out for so many Christians. Because we live in a culture that worships comfort. Amen? Our entire economy is built around making your life easier, smoother, more convenient. Same-day delivery. Streaming on demand. Drive-through everything. Temperature-controlled everything. Memory foam everything. We have optimized our lives for maximum comfort. AND that's not necessarily wrong. I like *air conditioning*. I'm not giving up air conditioning. I grew up here in Florida without it as a kid and I am not going back.

But here's the problem: **when comfort becomes the goal of your spiritual life, you're in trouble.** Because God is not in the business of making you comfortable. He's in the business of making you holy. And those are two very different projects.

I think the American church has an epidemic on its hands, and it's not the one people usually talk about. It's not moral failure or doctrinal drift or declining attendance. It's something quieter. More subtle. More respectable. It's an epidemic of spiritual satisfaction—people who have just enough God to be inoculated against the real thing. Enough religion to feel okay. Enough Bible knowledge to answer the questions. Enough church attendance to check the box. But not enough hunger to actually be transformed.

And Jesus saw it 2,000 years ago. He saw it standing right in front of Him in the form of the most religious people on the planet. And He described their condition with one devastating sentence: “The old is better.”

So, let's unpack this together. Here's the first thing I want you to see:

## **1. Comfort is the enemy of calling.**

Let me give you the context of what's happening in Luke 5. The Pharisees (the ultra-religious leaders of Jesus day) and the disciples of John the Baptist come to Jesus with a complaint. And it's a religious complaint. They say, “John's disciples fast and pray. Our disciples fast and pray. But YOUR guys? They just eat and drink. What's up with that?”

Now, on the surface this seems like a reasonable question. Fasting was a big deal in first-century Judaism. The Pharisees fasted twice a week—Mondays and Thursdays. It was disciplined. It was devout. It was part of the system. And they had been doing it for generations. So, when they see Jesus' crew just hanging out, eating dinner, having a good time, it doesn't compute. It doesn't fit their framework.

And I don't want you to miss what I am saying, so I want to be clear here. The Pharisees weren't wrong to fast. Fasting is Biblical! It's a spiritual discipline! There's nothing wrong with it! Their problem wasn't that they were doing something bad. Their problem was that they were so committed to something **GOOD** that they couldn't recognize something **BETTER** was standing right in front of them.

SO, Jesus answers their complaint with three rapid-fire analogies, and they come so fast you almost miss the genius of them. First, He says, "You don't make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them." He's saying—I'm here! This is a party! Why would you mourn when the groom is in the room? Second, He says you don't tear a piece off a new garment to patch an old one—you'll ruin both. Right? He's saying—what I'm bringing doesn't fit into your old system. Stop trying to patch Me into your framework. Third, you don't pour new wine into old wineskins—the fermentation will burst them. He's saying—the new thing I'm doing is so alive, so dynamic, that your old containers can't hold it.

Three analogies, one message: **what God is doing right now doesn't fit into what you're used to. Stop trying to make it fit.**

But then He adds verse 39. And this is the one nobody talks about. This is the mic drop that everyone walks right past. After all, three illustrations, Jesus says:

<sup>39</sup> And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say, "**THE OLD IS BETTER.**"

That's not another illustration. That's a diagnosis. That's Jesus saying, you know why this isn't landing? It's because you're too satisfied with what you already have!

Come on, the Pharisees weren't evil men who hated God. I know we tend to cast them as the villains in every story, but in reality, these were the most dedicated, disciplined, passionate religious people in all of Israel. They had memorized the Torah. They tithed down to their spices—I'm talking a tithe of even their dill, cumin and mint. Nobody was more committed to God than these guys. And that was precisely the problem. They were so deeply formed by their system, so comfortable, so satisfied, so sure that what they had was the real thing, that they had zero appetite for the new wine Jesus was pouring.

Tim Keller nailed this when he said: "**Religion is the ultimate defense against God.**"

Let me say that again because it might be the truest sentence I've ever quoted in this room. Religion is the ultimate defense against God! Meaning: you can be so religious, so busy doing things FOR God, that you completely insulate yourself from actually encountering God. Your system becomes so airtight, so comfortable, so familiar that when God shows up in a way you didn't expect, you reject Him. Not because you're rebelling, but because you don't even recognize Him!

AND this is not just a first-century problem. We do this. We do this all the time. We build our little Christian routines (all good things, don't get me wrong, but) same Bible reading plan, same worship songs on the playlist, same seat on Sunday, same prayers before meals... AND I'm not knocking any of that! But when they become a substitute for the actual presence of God, when the routine replaces the relationship, when the system becomes the thing instead of the One the system was designed to point you to—that's when you're in the most dangerous place to be. That's when you are stuck on comfort.

The most dangerous spiritual condition isn't rebellion. It's satisfaction. It's being so full of the old wine that you have no appetite for what God is doing right now.

AND what makes it so dangerous is it looks like faithfulness. From the outside, it looks like you're killing it spiritually. You're at church every Sunday. You're volunteering. You're giving. You're reading. But on the inside? On the inside, you're running on fumes and calling it devotion. You've confused motion with intimacy. And Jesus is looking at you like He looked at the Pharisees going, "I'm right here. But you're so busy with your system that you can't even taste what I'm offering."

Come on, is that anybody besides me? Can I get an honest amen from someone?

I was reading Mark Sayers recently — he wrote a book called "A Non-Anxious Presence" and he describes how Western Christianity has largely become a consumer product. We shop for churches the way we shop for restaurants. We evaluate the worship, the preaching, the kids' program, the parking, the coffee, and if something better opens up down the road, we're out. And the whole time we think we're being spiritually discerning when really we're just being consumers. We're drinking old wine and calling it faithfulness when it's really just brand loyalty.

SO, let's get uncomfortable for a moment. You ready?

***Am I more in love with my idea of Jesus than I am with the actual Jesus?***

That's an uncomfortable question! Because my idea of Jesus is manageable. My idea of Jesus fits into my schedule. My idea of Jesus doesn't disrupt my plans. But the actual Jesus? The one who says, "sell everything," "leave your nets," "take up your cross..."

That Jesus is not manageable. He's not safe. And if I'm being honest, sometimes I prefer the version I can control.

That's the old wine. And it's dangerous because it tastes fine. It goes down smooth. It doesn't challenge anything. But it doesn't change anything either. And if it's not changing you, it's not the new wine.

Here's the second thing:

## 2. You can't taste the new if you won't put down the old.

Meaning you won't experience the real Jesus if you stay stuck with the comfortable one you have created. SO, let's look again at verse 39. Because I want to show you what stopped me as I was reading it. Jesus says:

<sup>39</sup> And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say, **"THE OLD IS BETTER."**

AND this is what caught me off guard. At first glance you can read this to mean Jesus is AGREEING that the old is better. It's like, "Wait a minute Jesus, you just were talking about the new wine, but the old is better? Wait, what?" BUT what Jesus is actually doing here is describing the problem, not endorsing it. He's holding up a mirror to the Pharisees.

In the ancient world, just like today, old wine was generally considered superior. It was smoother, more refined. New wine was rough, sharp, still fermenting, still doing its thing. So, when someone said, "The old is better," that wasn't controversial. That was just common sense. It was basically a proverb—something everyone nodded at without thinking about it. BUT Jesus takes their own proverb and turns it against them. He's essentially saying: "Of course someone who has only ever drunk old wine will reject the new. They'll say, 'the old is better' without ever giving the new a fair taste."

AND here is what was so convicting about this when I read it. Jesus is so brilliant! Because the very thing Jesus describes in verse 39—the way familiarity breeds blindness, the way comfort keeps you from curiosity—it is the SAME THING that causes most readers to skip right over verse 39! We're so used to the wineskins parable that we don't even taste the last sip! Jesus is literally demonstrating His own point on the reader. We just prove His case by not even noticing the verse.

SO, as I got digging around I found that the word translated "wants" as in "no one wants the new," it's not that they CAN'T taste the new wine. It's that they WON'T. It's a decision. They are choosing NOT to put down the old cup and reach for the new one. Because the old wine is familiar. The old wine is what you know. And our brains are literally wired to prefer it.

There's a well-documented phenomenon in behavioral science called "status quo bias." Researchers back in 1988 found that people consistently, disproportionately prefer the current state of affairs—even when objectively better options are available. They found that your brain treats the familiar as safe and the unfamiliar as a threat. Meaning we choose comfortable over transformative almost every single time... *Unless something intervenes.*

And that something? That's the Holy Spirit. That's the only force strong enough to override the brain's addiction to the familiar. This is why Jesus said you must be born again. This is why Paul says be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Because your natural mind will always reach for the old cup. You need supernatural intervention to want the new wine.

Come on, you have felt this, haven't you? You've felt that pull. That moment when you sensed God calling you into something new—a new season, a new step of obedience, a deeper level of surrender—and everything inside you said, "No, no, no, I'm good where I am. The old is better. What I've got works fine." But does it? Does it really? Or have you just gotten used to the taste of something that stopped satisfying you a long time ago?

I'm asking you to be honest with yourself today. Because Jesus is not going to force the new wine on you. He never does. He offers it. He pours it. He sets it on the table. But you have to pick it up. And you can't pick up the new while you're still clutching the old.

God sent me to tell someone today to put the cup down. Put down the old way of doing things that stopped working years ago. Put down the version of Christianity that's all duty and no delight. Put down the spiritual routine that makes you feel productive but leaves you empty. Put it down so your hands are free to receive what God has for you right now!

Some of you are clutching old wine in your marriage. You keep doing the same thing expecting different results. You keep having the same fight, the same way, about the same stuff. And nothing changes. Because you won't put down the old way of relating and let God show you something new.

Some of you are clutching old wine in your parenting. The playbook you used when your kids were 6 doesn't work now that they're 16. But you keep running the same plays and getting more and more frustrated. God might be trying to pour new wine into that relationship, but you're gripping the old wineskin so tight it can't hold anything new.

Some of you are clutching old wine in your career. God has been stirring something new in your spirit—a different direction, a different calling—but you won't let go because the old wine pays the bills. And I get that. That's real. But when did financial security become a higher value than obedience to the voice of God?

Some of you are clutching old wine in your relationship with God Himself. You're still relating to Him the same way you did when you first got saved. Same prayers. Same approach. Same level of depth. And He's saying, "There's so much more. There's a depth you haven't tasted. There's an intimacy you haven't experienced. But you have to be willing to go deeper." And deeper always feels unfamiliar at first.

Come on, the old wine isn't bad. It got you here! Thank God for it! But it can't take you where He wants to lead you next. And that leads us to this:

### 3. God isn't asking you to throw away what's good, He's inviting you into what's better.

Here's where I think we find the grace in this passage. Because Jesus isn't being mean here. He's not mocking the Pharisees. He's not condemning them for preferring old wine.

Kenneth Bailey, a scholar who spent decades studying the Middle Eastern context of the Gospels, wrote in his book "Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes" that there may actually be a subtle note of empathy in verse 39. Jesus isn't attacking the Pharisees. He's *explaining* them. Almost with compassion. He's saying, "Of course they resist. People always resist the new wine at first. That's how it works. That's human nature."

SO, is Jesus leaving the door open? Is He saying, "I understand why you're not there yet." I think so. I think there's grace in the diagnosis. Because here's what Jesus is NOT saying. He's not saying the Old Testament was bad. He's not saying the Law was a mistake. He's not saying tradition is worthless. He honored the Law! He said He came to fulfill it, not abolish it. The old wine wasn't poison. It was genuinely good. It served its purpose. It pointed people in the right direction.

But it was pointing them to HIM! The Law, the prophets, the sacrificial system, the Temple—all of it was an arrow aimed at Jesus. And when the thing the arrow is pointing to finally shows up, you don't keep staring at the arrow! Amen?

Dallas Willard said it this way:

"The greatest issue facing the world today, with all its heartbreaking needs, is whether those who, by profession or culture, are identified as 'Christians' will become disciples—students, apprentices, practitioners—of Jesus Christ, steadily learning from him how to live the life of the Kingdom of the Heavens into every corner of human existence."

Willard was saying the same thing Jesus was saying. The greatest danger isn't that we'll reject God. It's that we'll settle for a version of Him that's comfortable, manageable, predictable... and miss the real thing entirely. That we'll be so satisfied with old wine religion that we never taste the new wine of actual Kingdom life.

I have watched this play out in church culture for over 25 years. I've watched people cling to "the way we've always done it" like it was the 11th commandment. I've watched people leave churches, GOOD churches, because something changed and they didn't like it. Not because the truth changed. The truth never changes. But the method, the style, the approach changed and people couldn't handle it. "The old is better," they said. And they walked away from something God was doing because it didn't taste like what they were used to.

AND I've seen the opposite too. I've seen people so hungry for something new that they'll chase every trend, every fad, every flashy new church or conference and never put roots down anywhere. That's not what Jesus is calling us to either. He's not saying new is always better. He's saying don't let your love of the familiar keep you from what God is doing RIGHT NOW.

**So...** what is God doing right now? In your life? Not in 2019. Not in that one season where everything clicked. Not back when you were first saved and everything felt electric and new. Right now. What is He stirring? What is He inviting you into? What new wine is He trying to pour that you keep refusing because you've got a death grip on the old cup?

Maybe it's a relationship He's asking you to step into (or out of). Maybe it's a calling He's been whispering about for months, and you keep hitting snooze. Maybe it's a level of generosity that terrifies you, you know He's been tugging at your heart about your giving, but you keep saying, "Not yet, God, not with this inflation and these gas prices!" Maybe it's forgiving someone and you've been saying, "I'm not ready..." for three years now! Maybe it's just letting go of control, that white-knuckle grip on your plans, your kids' futures, your retirement. Maybe it's getting out of your comfort zone and getting baptized today and going public with your faith!

Maybe it's as simple as this: To stop sitting in the same seat. To stop talking to the same Christian friends. To stop reading the same three books of the Bible. To stop praying the same prayers you've been praying since you were twelve. Maybe God is saying, "I've got something new for you, but you have to put down what's in your hands to receive it. AND it's going to be uncomfortable at first." Maybe you try some solitude, or fasting, or some contemplative prayer, or some other practice that feels a little out there from what you are used to.

I remember 20 years ago when we were planting this church (what we are celebrating today), there were a hundred things I had to let go of. Comfort. A steady paycheck. Approval from people who thought we were crazy. The old wine of predictability and security. And I'll tell you, the new wine tasted rough going down. It was scary. It was uncertain. But it was ALIVE. And I would not trade what God did in that season for all the old wine in the world.

Whatever it is for you, hear me today: God is not asking you to throw away what's good. He's inviting you into what's BETTER! Good is the enemy of great! Good is the thing that keeps you satisfied enough to never reach for something better! The Pharisees had something GOOD. They had the Law of Moses! That's not nothing! But standing right in front of them was the One the Law was pointing to, and they missed Him because they were too comfortable with what they already had.

Don't let that be your story! Don't let the history books of heaven say that you came so close to the real thing but you settled for comfort! Don't let comfort steal your calling! Don't let familiarity blind you to the God who is standing right in front of you offering you something you've never tasted before!

The new wine is rougher. It's less refined. It's still fermenting. It might not feel as smooth going down. But it's ALIVE. It's MOVING. It's WORKING. And it will change you from the inside out if you'll just let go of the old cup long enough to take a sip!

I feel like somebody in this room right now is on the edge of something. You've been feeling it for weeks, maybe months. Something's been stirring. Something hasn't been sitting right. You can't quite name it, but there's a holy dissatisfaction that's been growing in you. And you've been trying to make it go away by drinking more old wine— more routine, more activity, more religious busyness. But it's not working. Because that dissatisfaction isn't a problem. It's an invitation! It's the Holy Spirit creating thirst in you for something you haven't tasted yet!

Don't numb that thirst! Don't medicate it with more of the same! That thirst is a gift! It means God isn't done with you! It means He's got new wine with your name on it! And all you have to do is put down the old cup, open your hands, and say, "God, I'm ready. Whatever You're pouring, I want it. Even if it's unfamiliar. Even if it's uncomfortable. I want the new wine."

SO, two things and we are done and we will celebrate baptisms and eat cake!

If you're here and you're still searching, maybe you tried Christianity before and it didn't click, or maybe you've been looking at it from the outside and decided it wasn't for you, can I challenge you with something? What if what you tasted wasn't the real thing?

What if the version of Christianity you rejected was old wine—someone else's stale religion—and not the actual new wine of the Kingdom? What if the Jesus you dismissed was a domesticated Jesus, a manageable Jesus, and the real one is far more wild and beautiful and life-giving than anything you've experienced?

Give Him a real shot this week. Not religion. Not a system. Jesus. Read one of the Gospels. Watch what He does. Listen to what He says. And taste it for yourself. THEN sit with Him! Even if you aren't sure of all this yet, just talk to Him. Sit in His presence. See if He stirs anything in you.

If you're already a follower of Jesus then the second thing is ask this question:

***Where are you stuck on comfortable?***

Where has your faith become more system than relationship? Where are you going through the motions and calling it devotion? This week, I want you to do something spiritually uncomfortable. Not reckless, uncomfortable. Get on your knees and pray a dangerous prayer: "God, whatever new thing You're doing, I don't want to miss it. Give me an appetite for the new wine." BUT where are you stuck on comfortable?

Because Jesus is looking at us today and saying this:

<sup>39</sup> No one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say, "**THE OLD IS BETTER.**"

He's describing us. He's describing our preference for comfort over calling, for the familiar over the transformative, for the safe over the sacred. And He's not condemning us for it. He's inviting us past it.

The new wine is on the table. Your Father poured it. And He's looking at you right now with eyes full of grace saying, "I know the old is familiar. I know it's comfortable. But taste this. Just taste it. Because what I have for you is so much better than what you've been settling for."

Would you bow your heads and pray with me?

[PRAYER TIME]