

Too Big For Your Old Box — Delivery Transcript

****Matthew 9:14–17 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, September 27, 2026 · *What Man Is This?*****

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If you've got a Bible, we're going to be in Matthew chapter 9 as we continue a series we've been in in the book of Matthew. And as you're turning there — one of the questions that when I was a kid they would teach us to ask people when we would go out sharing our faith is: if you were to die today and you were to stand before God in judgment, and he were to ask you the question, "Why should I let you into heaven?" — what would you say?

I always thought that question was a little bit crazy to ask someone when you're knocking on their door. "Hello, my name is Wes Terry. If you were to die today..." You know, it just felt a little bit hostile, a little bit aggressive. But sure enough, that's what they taught us, and that's what we did. And so I went around and asked that question. I'm less afraid of the question today, I guess, because when you get older you begin to realize there are really important questions in life — and that's certainly one of them.

But I do remember that one of the things I would hear when that question was raised — the most common answer — was, "I don't know. I don't know what I would say." And after they would say something along the lines of "I'm not sure," they would then start bringing out some of their evidences that even though they're not sure God would let them in, they hope that he would. And usually it was some kind of religious activity: "I got baptized when I was eight or nine." "I try to be a good person." "I'm a member at such-and-such church." I've even had people point to, "I've got an uncle who's a preacher," and they start giving their credentials — who's a deacon and who's a preacher. And it really is funny when you bring that question out to people how defensive they can get — because it's one of those questions that can surface in us a lot of insecurity.

Most people believe that some kind of God exists. Most people believe that God is personal — he's some kind of moral standard before whom we're going to give an account. Most of us wrestle with guilt and feeling like we're not what we're supposed to be. And so if God exists and he's that standard of perfection, I think we kind of innately recognize that we're going to give

an account. We're going to be judged. And we don't want to fail that test. And so we try to defend ourselves. It's not surprising that we would bring those things out.

What I want to throw out there for us to consider today is: **what if the things that we point to to provide evidence that we are sincere in our religious convictions — that we do love Jesus, we do love God, we do want to do our best to be pleasing to God — what if that sincerity isn't enough?** What if what God really is looking for isn't even the level of our sincerity? What if he's looking for something else?

And I would say the same thing to those who are not religious. There's a secular religion in our culture. I don't know exactly how I would describe it, but it's this religion of "spiritual but not religious." I hear that phrase a lot. Usually what they mean is: I believe in God, I believe in being a good person, but I don't like organized religion. I don't want to attach myself with religion because religious people are judgy and I'm not judgy. And so in that way, our cultural religion has a God, has a heaven, has a hell, has a good, has a bad. And people who are committed to that way of thinking also try to bring out evidences that they're a good person. They'll say things like, "I just accept people as they are. I try not to judge anybody. I try to be very accepting." And implied in all of that is: I hate the right kind of people that I'm supposed to hate, and I love the right kind of people I'm supposed to love, and I'm for what I'm supposed to be for, and I'm against what I'm supposed to be against — because there's this kind of cultural pressure to conform to that religious standard.

So whether you're a religious person bringing it from that lens or an irreligious person coming from a different lens, all of us are kind of innately prone to point to our sincerity and our efforts and bring out those evidences. And what if that's not what matters? What if your sincerity is not what God was looking for?

The reason I raise that question is because I think we would all innately agree that sometimes it doesn't matter whether you're sincere or not. You can be sincere and still be very wrong. **You can be sincerely wrong.** And if we've not seen anything else in our journey through the Gospel of Matthew, what we have seen is Jesus challenge this notion of sincerity. He's challenged this notion of religious conformity — kind of at a surface level ensuring that our T's are crossed and our I's are dotted and we're better than the bad people that are out there to our left and to our right. And what Jesus has essentially done is thrown a wrench into that system. He's essentially said: what God is after is not your religious conformity. He's not after even your sincerity. He's not after what you do at all. It's rather something different.

And so what I want us to see this morning is that different thing — because that's at the heart of the message of Jesus, and that's why Jesus was so disruptive in his original context.

Set the table

If you're new to the New Testament or if you're new to studying the Bible: what we've been doing is looking at the life of Jesus through the lens of one eyewitness by the name of Matthew. Matthew was originally a tax collector, which in the first century meant he was *persona non grata* — hated by everyone who was a Jewish person anyway because of their collaboration with

Rome. And yet Jesus chose him, out of all the people that he could have chosen, to become one of his followers. And that I think is a great evidence of what Jesus has been doing up into this point — which is upsetting the apple cart.

We talked about Jesus's Sermon on the Mount and how Jesus pointed to the most religious people of his day and said essentially: if you want to be right with God, you've got to do better than that. He pointed to the fact that religious conformity is not sufficient — that God cares about the heart. He doesn't just care about the *what*; he cares about the *why*. He says you've got to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. He talked about how you shouldn't just do things to be seen by others, but you should do something to be pleasing to your Father in heaven — that your Father's concerned about a covenant relationship more than he is your rituals and things like that. And then when he got done with that sermon, everyone was amazed because he taught with such authority.

And then after he came down the mount he used that authority to do other things — like heal someone of leprosy, and he touched him when he wasn't supposed to touch him. And then Jesus would interact with this Roman centurion who was not supposed to be interacted with by Jewish people, because Rome was the enemy and a centurion was top dog in the enemy's camp. And yet Jesus commends this man for his faith and heals his servant. And then Jesus does other things that he's not supposed to do — like heal all the crazy people in Capernaum: every sick person, every demented person, every person on the outside, the marginalized, the outcast, the untouchables. Jesus says, "I want to bring them all to me," and he healed every single one. So he was going where no one else would go. He was doing what no one else would do. He was doing the things that were culturally taboo — that the religious establishment of his day was unwilling to do. And yet Jesus was doing it. And not only was he doing it — he was proving that this was what God really wanted, because he had a level of authority to perform miracles and do wonders that no one else could do — as if to say: not only have I come from heaven, not only am I from and one with God the Father — I've come to challenge your mistaken assumptions that what you think God wants is not what he wants, and that how you think you're going to be right with God is not going to make you right with God. God is wanting something else.

And all of that climaxes in chapter 9, where Jesus forgives this paralytic of his sins. And in forgiving him of his sins he raises everyone's hackles, and they rightly say, "That's blasphemy. No one can forgive sins but God alone." And then Jesus essentially makes a claim to divinity and says, "So that you will know that I do have this authority, I say to you: get up, take your mat and go home." And the paralytic who had been unable to walk takes up his mat, gets up, and goes home. And everyone then has to wrestle with this truth: Jesus is not just a man. That's the heart of the question of the series: **What man is this?** What kind of man can calm the wind and the waves? What kind of man can forgive other men of sin? What kind of man can drive out demons and exercise that kind of authority and power over evil? Not just any man. Jesus is not just a man. He's the Son of God.

And so people at this point in the Gospel of Matthew are pretty well willing to accept that Jesus very well could be the Christ. But what they were having to do was change what they believed

the Christ would be. And in that way Jesus did for them what he does to you and me today: he challenges our religious assumptions. In your notes: **Jesus came to challenge your personal religion.**

And for the rest of this sermon what I'm going to call that is your *old box* — because all of us, whether you realize it or not, are coming to God with a religion, a box of sorts. Now you may not think you're religious. You may be a skeptical person. But if you're a person and you have thoughts about God, that's a religious box. You're a theologian. You didn't know it. You have thoughts about God. You're a good theologian or you're a bad theologian — but you're a theologian nonetheless. And so all of us come to God with a box of what we think he's like and what we think it takes to be rightly related to him. And what we're going to see Jesus do is challenge that box and challenge our personal religion — and really invite us to set it aside so that we can receive something better, something true, something new.

Reading the text

So with that said, let's pick it up in Matthew chapter 9. Jesus has just made everyone mad because he's hanging out with Matthew who is a tax collector. He's invited all the tax collectors and sinners over to Matthew's house for a feast. He's wining and dining and reclining with those people. And so the Pharisees and the scribes accuse Jesus's disciples — of him being a glutton and a drunkard: this guy should not be hanging out with those people that way.

And then another group comes and confronts him — which I would not call skeptical or hostile. These are John's disciples — John the Baptist — and they come to Jesus with a sincere question.

Then John's disciples came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?" Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests be sad while the groom is with them? The time will come when the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. No one patches an old garment with unshrunk cloth, because the patch pulls away from the garment and makes the tear worse. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the skins burst, the wine spills out, and the skins are ruined. No, they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved."

And this is one of those verses that you've maybe heard before. It's a classic text. And I believe it is the climax of this whole unit from chapter 8 all the way to the end of chapter 9. This is at the very center. And it's hard to understand what Jesus is saying without understanding everything on either side.

So he has been challenging the personal religion of every single person. He's challenged his disciples. He's challenged the Pharisees. He's challenged the scribes. He's even challenged the Roman centurion. And now he's challenging John's disciples. And they come to Jesus, I think, sincere. They've been waiting for the Messiah. That's the role of John the Baptist — to prepare the way for Messiah. John had been arrested at this point. He got his head chopped off by Herod. Some of John's disciples had already started following Jesus, and others of his disciples were struggling. Even John the Baptist had sent a message to Jesus from prison: "Are you

really the one that is to come?" He doubted because Jesus was doing things that challenged his assumptions. He was saying and doing things that they didn't think the Christ would say or do. And so it's not surprising that John's disciples come to Jesus and ask the question: why do we fast twice a week, but then you guys don't fast?

And what I want you to see in Jesus's response is he makes a contrast between their box and his mission. And he says: what yours is is old, and what mine is is new. And if you try to put my new thing into your old box, your old box is not going to be able to contain it, and my new wine is going to ruin it, and it's going to spill out, and your old box is going to be useful for nothing. And so the whole point of the text is that Jesus is doing a new thing that is going to challenge our old box — and that if we're going to receive the benefit of what Jesus is bringing, then we've got to set our old box aside and do something different.

And so I want us to talk about your box and my box and the old box that we bring to Jesus. You could call it your old skins — but you know, I didn't want to be insulting, because some of us have old skins... so we'll stop. We'll call it your old box. And why is it that you have one?

Your old box may be respected

Everybody has an old box because most people have thoughts about God. What makes you love your box, generally speaking, is that your box becomes respected by people. And when your box is well respected by others, it causes you to think your box is correct. And that's what you see with John the Baptist and his disciples. They come to Jesus and they say, "Jesus, why do you not fast? We fast twice a week. You don't fast at all."

And for them to fast twice a week was a very big deal — because in the Old Testament there's only one fast that's ever prescribed. It's on the Day of Atonement, and it happens once a year. But by the time the first century came around, you had a group of people called the Pharisees and then their devotees who were zealous for God. They believed that God was great and that God deserved everything that you could give. He deserved sacrifice. He deserved giving up as much as you could give up to bless him. And so traditions had developed on top of the Old Testament — extra rules and fences. And those extra rules and fences included spiritual practices like fasting.

Now the Bible says to fast. The Bible says to pray. The Bible says to give. But they added extra rules and fences on those things. And so if giving is good, we're going to give a lot. And if fasting is good, we're going to fast a lot. And if praying is good, we're going to pray so hard and so great that people are just like, "You're the best prayers there ever was." And they did. And they developed these traditions. And they were very impressive. And people would look at them and their traditions and their moral behaviors and they would say, "You guys are amazing."

Just like we do the same thing today. We have our moral traditions. We have extra rules and fences that we put on top of what the Bible says we ought to do. And if we're not careful we can begin to get a sense of spiritual security — and spiritual smugness, to be honest — because we've gotten the respect of other people. "Wow, you're such a godly person. You're so faithful to

your church. You're so gifted in your service to the Lord. You're such an honest person. You never watch those kind of movies. You're never using that kind of humor. You're so generous..." And on the surface there's nothing wrong with that. Certainly nothing wrong with living in a righteous way.

But what had happened to the disciples of John is that they were using the respect that they were gaining from their box as a substitute for what God really wanted. And they were thinking: because other people are impressed with my religious box, my religious box therefore must be true.

Now why did they think that way, and why did people respect them? I see two reasons in the text.

Number one: because of the sacrifice required by their personal box. When your old box requires great sacrifice, people will look at your dedication and they will respect it. You may not be fasting twice a week — probably most of us aren't; you can tell I'm certainly not — but we would do other things that I think people would point to, and people would commend you for your sacrifice. But just because your religious box requires you to sacrifice a great deal does not mean that your old box is true or what God wants.

And I think we would all recognize that when we would look at something like Islamic radical terrorists sacrificing a great deal — namely their own lives — to fly a plane into the World Trade Center. Wow, what great sacrifice. But none of us would say they love God. None of us would say that they were correct. We would all say they were mistaken. They were sincere. They were sacrificial. **But they were sincerely wrong.** And in their sacrifice not only did they ruin their lives — they ruined the lives of many, many other people. And so just because it requires a sacrifice doesn't mean that God's impressed. And just because it's respected doesn't mean that it's true. Just because you're sincere doesn't mean you're not wrong.

The other reason that their box was respected is because of the tendency of your box and my box to set a standard of righteousness. And the way that I would explain this is what Jesus talked about in the Sermon on the Mount. In the first century there was a status quo that had been enacted by the scribes and the Pharisees — because they took their extra rules and fences and they enforced it into traditional law. Essentially if you were going to be a Jewish person you had to adopt their extra rules and fences. And so even though God didn't prescribe to do it this way in the Old Testament, because the people who loved God developed those extra traditions, then if you really wanted to prove you love God, you did their thing on top of God's thing.

And I think that's what we do today if you're not careful with your old box. What you can do is take your extra rules and fences and universalize them on everyone else. And because you don't listen to that kind of music, then no one's supposed to listen to that kind of music. And because you don't allow yourself to enjoy art that has maybe coarse language or something like that, then nobody's supposed to do that. And you begin to do what John's disciples did — which is come to Jesus and essentially say: you're not doing religion the way I do religion; therefore you must be doing it wrong. But they weren't doing it wrong. The Bible only prescribed one fast a

year. It was on the Day of Atonement. And they weren't disobeying that law. What they were breaking was not God's law. They were just doing it different than John's disciples. And their assumption was: because it's different than mine, therefore it must not be true.

And that's why a lot of people will respect your old box — because your extra rules and fences may be what makes them feel better about themselves. And then you all feel better about yourselves because you're better than this person and that person and that group and that group. But the reality is it's not impressive to God — because you're using a different standard than what God's standard ever was. And that's the point that Jesus was making in Matthew chapter 5 and the Sermon on the Mount. He doesn't want religious conformity at the external level. God's concerned about the heart. He's not just concerned about the *what*; he's concerned about the *why*. He's not just concerned that you toe the line at a technical level. He wants a heart of covenant relationship, mercy, and love. And so when that's absent — even if everyone else congratulates you and praises you because of your religious fervor — it doesn't mean that God is impressed.

So your old box may be respected. But that doesn't mean it's right — especially when your old box can't reconcile you to God. And that was the facts with the disciples of John. They had a very taxing and demanding spiritual vision. But that spiritual vision was incapable of reconciling them to God. And that's the big problem with your box and my box: **it can't make you right with God.** It can make you look good. It can make others respect you. But it can't make you right with God — two reasons.

Your old box can't make you right with God

Why it can't do that — Jesus mentions them in verse 15. Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests be sad while the groom is with them? The time will come when the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast."

So essentially Jesus changes the topic from religious practices to a wedding. On the surface it feels like a rabbit trail, but Jesus is doing this intentionally. He asks the question: can the wedding guests be sad while the groom is with them? The answer to that question is an obvious no. Like if you were at a wedding and you're the best man or the bridesmaid and you're Debbie Downer — you know, not cool. You're failing to meet your social obligation. And that's true in our context. It was certainly true in this context. And so Jesus is basically saying: there are times to fast and there's times not to fast, and this is a time not to fast.

Now why was that true? Matthew's doing something very specific — and this is why when you read the Bible you want to read it in its context. Both Luke and Mark tell the same story, and yet they tell it a little bit different. Only Matthew uses this phrase: "be sad while the groom is with them." Should they be sad? The other two said, "Should they fast?" Matthew says, "Should they be sad?" His emphasis is on their emotional state. And this is an allusion to the Old Testament prophet Zechariah, where Israel was committed to mourning and fasting even though they were doing it for the wrong reasons. And so what God does is he rebukes them for their fasting and mourning because they weren't fasting and mourning for the right reason.

They were fasting and mourning for the sake of fasting and mourning. It was not in an effort to gain the presence of God.

So when you fasted in the first century — just like today — you're fasting because you're sad. You're fasting because someone died, because God feels absent, because you want God to come and redeem the world. They were doing that back in the prophet Zechariah because they had been dispersed among the nations. They were in this Babylonian captivity for seventy-plus years. And what they did for those seventy years is they would fast and lament in the fifth and the seventh months for seventy years. And the question that God begins to ask them is: did you really fast for me? Or have you been doing the religious tradition so long that you've forgotten what they're actually for?

They had made the religious practice an end unto itself — kind of like for us: you may go to church just so you can go to church, because if I don't go to church people are going to think I'm not been going to church... they're going to think I'm doing whatever... and if I don't go to church then I'm breaking my traditions of what my mom and dad expected me to do... or any number of things other than the main thing. And what's the main thing for going to church? It's to meet with God. And so it'd be like God saying: are you going to church because you want to meet with me, or is there a different motive? And in their case there was a different motive. And so he rebukes them and he basically says: you're fixed on your religious traditions and you're neglecting mercy and compassion and you're abusing the poor and you're doing all of these things which just makes you a hypocrite. And then he talks about judging them. And then after their judgment he was going to bring them back to Jerusalem. And when he says, "When I come back to Jerusalem, I'm going to restore your fortunes and I'm going to dwell with you there" — there's this little phrase that I think Jesus is alluding to in his conversation with John's disciples. In chapter 8 verse 19 he says that the fast of the fourth month and the fifth month and the seventh month and the tenth month — so notice he takes their two months and then adds two more months on top of that — basically saying: when the day of harvest comes, when the Lord returns, there's not going to be a need for fasting. Not only will you not need to fast in the fifth and seventh — you won't need to fast for any of the months — because the Lord is present, and there will be times of joy and gladness and cheerful festivals in the house of Judah. Therefore love truth and peace. Because what God wants more than the fasting is the spirit behind the fasting.

So the problem with your old box is it can't make you right with God. You cannot be made right with God just by fasting. You cannot be made right with God just by going to church. You can't be made right with God because you give money. You can't be made right with God as a secular humanist because you accept everyone. You can't be made right with God because you hate all of the right people. Righteous with God, Jesus is saying, has way less to do with religious ritual and religious practices than it does this other thing. And the other thing that God cares about more is this covenant relationship. He uses the analogy of marriage, which is so, so helpful. **There is only one way to be made right with God, and it's through God's covenant mercy and grace.** And so when you focus on the ritual at the expense of that relationship, then you're doing the ritual, but you're doing it for the wrong reasons.

And that's the two reasons for us today why our old box won't work. Your old box cannot make you right with God because if you're focused only on the box, then you're doing the right things but for the wrong reason. You're going to church, but you're going to church so that no one will think you're bad. You're teaching a Sunday school so that people will think you're a great Christian. You're singing, you're worshipping, you're playing guitar, you're doing whatever it is that you're doing — but the reason behind it that God really cares about — that's what's awry. You're doing the right thing, but it's for the wrong reason. And in that way it can't make you right.

In fact Jesus talks a little later in this Gospel about the scribes and the Pharisees: they worship me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. This is why Jesus quoted Hosea — which is also a prophet about marriage, and how God is the groom and Israel is the unfaithful bride, and how he is faithful even though she's unfaithful. And Hosea says: go learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice. I desire covenant faithfulness and not your religious ritual. You can fast and pray and give until you're blue in the face — but if those things matter more to you than this relationship, this covenant marriage, then you are missing the point. And he would say the same thing to you today: do not do the right thing for the wrong reasons, and don't prioritize religious ritual over the covenant relationship.

Not to say that religious ritual is bad. I think there's a mistake that people can make on that end as well — where you can so prioritize this idea that God wants us to focus on the relationship that you almost denigrate religious ritual as though those things are irrelevant and unnecessary. There is a place for fasting. Jesus does not rebuke it. He just says that the fasting is in the right order. The fasting is in service of the relationship, not in place of it. And so it's not either/or — ritual or relationship. It's both. But the relationship has to be the end and the ritual has to be the means. You can't do it for the wrong reasons and you can't choose religious ritual over the covenant relationship.

God is our groom. We are his bride. That was true of Israel in the Old Testament: "I will take you to be my wife forever. You will know the Lord." That's why Jesus said he wants knowledge of God, not sacrifice. When you make your religious ritual a priority over covenant relationship, then you will see that your old box cannot make you right with God.

Then Jesus gives one more example — and with this we're going to be done. Your religious ritual may be respected, but that doesn't mean it's right — especially when your religious ritual can't make you right with God. It can't make you right with God because you do right for the wrong reasons and you're elevating the ritual over the covenant relationship. The best way to think about your Christian life is as a marriage. If you're married to Jesus, the rituals matter. But if you were married to someone and you only ever did the dishes and all the other things you're supposed to do — laundry and fold it the right way — and you stopped caring about the person with whom you're in relationship — they don't care that you're doing all the religious ritual if the intimacy is gone. And the same is true in your relationship with the Lord Jesus.

Your old box will refuse what Jesus offers

The biggest reason why the old box has to go, though, is because **the old box is going to refuse what Jesus offers**. And that's the main climax — the two illustrations in verse 16 and verse 17.

First Jesus uses the illustration of a patch. He says no one patches an old garment with unshrunk cloth — meaning new cloth — because the patch pulls away from the garment and makes the tear worse. And then no one puts new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise the skins burst, the wine spills out, and then the skins are ruined.

So Jesus uses two illustrations very, very common in the day. You kind of sew your own clothes back then, and there was kind of a universal well-known principle that if you're going to patch your clothes, you patch old clothes with old patches — because new fabric shrinks. I think you already know this, right? If you go to JCPenney or Jungblood's or Bigner's and you buy a new 100% cotton T-shirt, and you try it on and it fits just right — you know, kind of amplifies your features — then you take it home and you put it in the washer, and if you dry it, what's going to happen? It's going to shrink. And then your features are too pronounced and you don't want that. So you didn't understand what happens with new cotton. And so the same thing is true if you're going to put a patch on your jeans — you wanted to use old garments so that that shrinkage has already taken place. And that's what Jesus is saying.

The other analogy that he uses may be familiar to you if you're into wine and stuff like that. New wine, before it becomes good, needs to go through a process of fermentation and aging. And when that happens what the wine does is — it's kind of like a living organism. When it ferments it expands and breathes and does this really neat thing. And so if you put that kind of wine in an old wineskin, what's going to happen? It's going to break the wineskin — because old wineskins have already been stretched out, and if they're really old they're probably dry, which means when it does stretch it's going to crack and break the wineskin and the new wine is going to spill out.

And so what Jesus is doing in both cases is he's comparing something new and something old. And he's saying the new thing is incompatible with the old thing — and that if you try to put the new thing into the old thing, it's going to break the old thing. It's going to rip it and tear it and basically ruin it so that it can't be used again. And the same is true, Jesus is saying, about your old box and my new thing. Your old box is going to refuse what I'm bringing because it is not able to receive it.

And that's true if you think about your old box and what Jesus is doing. And I see it in two ways — and just like John's disciples are revealing it in their context.

Some people want what Jesus has to offer, but they want it by way of what I'm going to call a patch. They want it by way of Jesus fixing the problems in their life that need fixing. And so I see this as a pastor all the time. People will get religion and they come to church and they say, "Hey, I want some counseling. Hey, I'm all about Jesus now. I want to join the church. I want to serve. Everything. I want to give all my money. I want to do all these things." And what's

behind that eager desire is: I need Jesus to fix my marriage. Or I need Jesus to get me a job. I need Jesus to give me a really great looking girlfriend. I need Jesus to do whatever it is. I just want my kids to be normal. So Jesus, fix my patch. Jesus, make her or make him normal. Give me a job. Help me find a good spouse. But don't talk to me about my body. Don't talk to me about my sexuality. Don't tell me how to spend my money. Don't tell me what friends I can and can't have. Don't be encroaching in on those arenas. I'm happy, Jesus — I'm happy for your wisdom, I'm happy for your counsel where I need it — but I don't want you telling me how to do this, that, or the other thing. I just need you to repair this one area.

And I'm sorry if that's the way that you think Jesus works. He does not. And you will not receive what he wants to bring if you treat him in that way. And notice the refusal is only one way. It's not Jesus refusing you. It's you — it's your box refusing Jesus — because of the nature of Jesus and how he works. Because he will not stop at being a repair. He never does. As soon as he fixes your marriage, as soon as he fixes your finances, he's going to move on to something else in your life that you didn't want him to talk about. He's going to start talking about your work ethic. He's going to start talking about your relationships. He's going to start talking about what you're doing on your smartphone — whether you're watching the wrong things or watching it too much altogether. He's going to start encroaching in those areas of your life that you didn't want him to encroach. That's just the way it is. That's just the nature of who Jesus is. He's not just a man. He's more than a man. He's God. He's your Maker. He's your Creator. And he desires to give you a flourishing life. And when you're living in ways that are not leading to flourishing, he's going to encroach on those areas and he's going to try to bring you out of that brokenness into God's design — and you don't get a say on whether he can or can't. And so you can't think of Jesus just as a repair. You will refuse what Jesus offers — because your box can't be repaired.

The second reason is because your box can't receive what Jesus brings. **Jesus is going to ruin every box that can't contain him.** Jesus talks about a threefold loss: the skins burst, the wine spills out, and the skins are ruined. So what are the old skins? That's the question — because that's what Jesus is saying can't work.

The old skins are not the Old Testament, from what I can see. There are those who would say that the old skins are the old covenant, and Jesus came to bring the new covenant. I don't think it's the Old Testament — because Jesus has been very clear: I did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I came that they might be fulfilled. The old skins — it's not the old covenant. It's the religious traditions that had developed around that covenant that Jesus rebukes in the Sermon on the Mount — this tendency of the religious establishment to put up extra rules and fences, to focus more on the surface than they did the heart, to focus more on the *what* than they did the *why*. And Jesus is saying: if you try to receive the new covenant into that system, the new covenant is going to break your system, and your system is going to break. It's going to break the wine. It's going to cause the wine to spill out. And your system is going to be ruined. And so any box that can't contain the new covenant that Jesus brings is a box that Jesus will ruin when he enters into it. And that includes your box and my box.

And ours is going to look a little different than first-century Judaism did — but it's similar to theirs in all of the ways that matter. If you're pointing to what you do and what you have done and how you're respected and better than other people and proving how sincere that you are — if it's more about what you have done instead of about what Christ has done, if it's more focused on the ritual than it is the relationship — then when Jesus pours his new-covenant grace into that old box, that old box is going to spit it out, because that's not the one it wants. It doesn't want humility. It doesn't want dependence. It doesn't want surrender. It wants manipulation and control. I want to be able to earn God's love. I want to be able to prove. I want to be able to know that I'm going to heaven because of all of the good things that I've done. And Jesus is saying: that's not the way that this new thing I'm doing is going to work. This new thing is a new covenant, and it's received in a different kind of way.

Your old box must be replaced with something new

And that's the last point. Matthew says: if you're going to avoid having your old system be ruined, you want to put new wine into fresh wineskins so that both can be preserved. **The old box must be replaced with something new.** You can't have your cake and eat it too.

And so for those of us who grew up in church and developed an old box and thought, "Jesus, you can kind of get attached to my box and make my life better without me having to change" — then you may call yourself a Christian, but you have been sorely deceived. And if you grew up in a Christian culture like most of us did and you kind of adopted the religious culture of the day and you thought, "I need to bring Jesus into my life; I need to be known as one of those Christian people" — but you still dedicated yourself to your own ambitions, to your own hopes and dreams, in your own kingdom — you may look Christian, you may sound Christian, you may think yourself a Christian — but you're not a Christian if you haven't replaced the box.

How do you replace the box? Jesus says you've got to release the old box — which is, I think, his way of saying repent. You need to agree with God that your previous way of doing things is simply not effective. I cannot be good enough. I cannot earn my way. I've got to be willing to admit my helplessness and my need for grace. And so you have to release your self-righteousness. You have to release even the good things. You have to release certainly your insistence that you get to control your life. You have to release this idea that I can have my cake and eat it too — this idea that Jesus does not demand everything. That has to be set aside. You can't have Jesus plus what you've had before. And until that release actually happens, you won't have empty hands with which to grab the new.

Now the way that Jesus describes this later in the Gospel of Matthew — he uses the language of covenant, which I've said before. That's why he uses the analogy of a marriage — because marriage is a covenant. And in the Old Testament the new covenant is described in this way: **a new reality requires a new response.** Jeremiah 31 describes the new covenant as a covenant wherein God does not write his law on tablets of stone, but he writes it on the walls of our hearts — and that in this new covenant the people of God will have a rich communion relationship. But the reason that they will have this intimate relationship is because God will

forgive them of their sins. He says they will be my people and I will be their God, because this covenant will forgive them of sins.

Now in the old covenant the way that they were forgiven of sin — well, they didn't get forgiven of sins in the old covenant. God would restrain judgment through the sacrifice of an animal. And all of that began in the Exodus with the blood of the Passover lamb. And so when Israel was leaving Pharaoh and slavery to Pharaoh in Egypt, God said: in order to protect your house from the death angel that's going to visit, you need to sacrifice the blood of a Passover lamb and put it above the lintel of your doorpost. And when the death angel sees the blood of the Passover lamb, then he will pass over you and you will be delivered.

What Jesus does in his Last Supper — at that final Passover meal — is he holds up the cup which was symbolic of that Passover lamb. And instead of saying God's forgiveness and mercy comes through the lamb, he holds up that cup and says, "This cup is the blood of the new covenant in my blood." Jesus is essentially saying: I am the Passover lamb. And it is through my blood being shed for you on the cross that God will pass over your sins. In other words: your sins will be forgiven not because you deserve it. Your sins will be forgiven because I deserve it — because I lived a life of sinless love and perfection, and then I laid down that life as a substitutionary sacrifice. I laid down that life in place of yours, so that God in his wrath would pour it out on me instead of him pouring out that wrath on you. And because I absorbed the wrath of God in your place for your sin, now you can receive God's love and mercy and everything that I receive in my life. In other words, there's a great exchange that takes place on the cross.

We just sang about it today — "The Lamb of God." In my place. His blood poured out. My sin erased. I can't remember how the rest of the song goes, but it's really good. The Lamb of God in my place. The blood for my sin. It was my death he died. I've been raised to life. Why? Because if you're united with him in his death, you're united with him in his resurrection. Hallelujah. The Lamb of God. Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world.

That's the new covenant. And it's different than any other box. And until you drop your box and receive that covenant, you are not a follower of Jesus. You do not possess the kingdom of God — even though people may respect you, and even though you may be very righteous and moral and commendable in all of those ways. **God is not looking for your sincerity. He's looking for that sincerity to be rightly placed in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for you.** He didn't come to call the righteous. He came to call sinners to repentance. And so if you're holding on to your righteousness and what you've done for him, you are not ready to stand before God in judgment. You need to release your self-righteousness and all of those things that you would cling to to answer that question — and you need to cling tightly onto Jesus who died in your place and rose again.

Jesus at that Last Supper said, "This is the cup of the new covenant for the forgiveness of sins." And then he said, "I will not drink it again until I drink it new in the kingdom of God." Jesus knew where he was going and what it would entail. And Jesus knew that that feast and that marriage would not come again until he came again in glory. And so we fast — we do the

religious rituals — because Jesus has been taken from us. But just because he was taken doesn't mean he won't return. Just like he was taken from the disciples and came back three days later.

Matthew ends his Gospel saying these words from Jesus: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything that I've commanded you. And behold, I am with you always." And so he is with us. And therefore that is what matters the most. And all of our religious conformity and rituals need to be centered around his presence, his life, and his death.

And so as we respond to the Lord in our invitation, I would encourage you to reflect on those things. And if you're not a Christian, then this morning is a wonderful invitation for you to believe the gospel — to believe that your hope is found in Jesus Christ and nothing more, nothing less. And if you are a Christian and you've been clinging to your old box — you've been wasting your time and effort, and you need to repent and believe. Repentance is agreeing with God about the facts. The facts are given to us in this text. And so let's respond with repentant hearts and joyful faith in what Jesus Christ has done.

Source: Broadview Church YouTube standalone — <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Un5LiwonYdQ> (uploaded Sep 27, 2026). ASR: local faster-whisper (small / int8). Polished for delivery readability.