

Anniversary sermon

Matthew 13:52

⁵²Then said he unto them, therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.

Matthew, being a Jewish man himself, and under the power of the Holy Ghost wrote his gospel to appeal primarily to the Jews. The teaching of Jesus was broad and the gospel writers emphasize that which appealed to their target audience. So in this context Matthew is emphasizing a point that Jesus made to the Jews who thought that the traditions and rituals of their religious order was all that were required to serve God. So in this text Jesus gave a hint that He Christ was standing in the middle of human history balance God’s will for the old order and the new order which He called the Kingdom of God. Matthew wanted us to see how Jesus was deeply rooted in the traditions of Israel – working to create something new.

That’s why I’ve chosen this text for our anniversary service. That our merger is **still new and infant**, and our success in doing the will of God is contingent upon how we balance both our heritage and our inheritance, the new.

Many of us, like the ancient scribes, are well schooled in the traditions of our faith, and of our particular branch of the Christian

Church. We have steadfast commitments to the traditions of faith and that is good and honorable and godly.

On the other hand, many of us are also deeply aware of the contemporary world and how God speaks to us now, through our experiences and through the communities where we live, as God spoke to our ancestors in the past. Many of us are also open to all that the contemporary world offers. So as we can see, that the old and the new are not exclusive of each other. They are both important and necessary for the health and life of the Kingdom.

If we are only living in the past and old and ignore the modern and new and the contemporary, then that is gross mismanagement of the Kingdom. On the other hand if we are only concerned about the new, modern, and contemporary, to the exclusion of the old and traditional then are doing gross disservice to the Kingdom. Then we are not good scribes. The good scribe is the one who carefully preserves in his treasures both the old and the new.

The very move we made to merge will either make us or break us unless we maintain that balance. This church, our two year old merger of our two churches, is a peculiar witness that we willing go beyond ourselves, go beyond our personal prides, to go beyond our personal desire to do God's will. We have already given up a lot and we have already taken in a lot to make this merger happen.

The fact that we merged still sounds like a fairytale to many. I am sure god is proud and heaven is happy by that move and so am I.

But lest we forget that the same merger presents with a challenge—a challenge to launch forward in a new way. If we will succeed then we much move and operate in a new way. As we made way for each other to together to merge so we must give way and embrace all that the modern world has to offer us. The ability to maintain the old while at the same time incorporating the new is characteristic of the good scribe in Matthew's gospel.

It is easy for people who live today to think those who lived before us simply old fashioned, strange, unenlightened. But they have wisdom to pass on to us and we are foolish to ignore it

So let the old embrace the young and the young embrace the old. And as we open the doors to the church for people to enter, let us open our hearts so that they will feel at home in the pews and also in our hearts. Let us make room to give them space to incorporate the gift that they bring with them as well.

The past and the old are our foundation but at the same time the future is our hope and destiny. Therefore the balance is tilted toward the future. Because everything, both the old and the new, past and present are moving into the future.

Unfortunately, this coordination of the elderly and the young, old and new, the ancient and the modern seem to bother many and they

are worried. The old are worried about losing their old familiar traditions, cliques, and ways of doing things. They worry about losing their old hymns, their formalities,

At the same time the young are intolerant of the old. They believe that the old is a thing of the past and no more necessary. But God needs them both.

Sometimes in the church we marginalize those who are ‘older’ and long only for ‘young’ and ‘new families’ to join us - and sometimes we are desperately frightened and intimidated by the presence of new things and new people and new ideas. Sometimes we make the terrible mistake of thinking that old is better than new, and vice versa.

But Jesus challenged the disciples that successful steward of the kingdom of heaven we are like caretakers who can produce both the old and the new.

That is the challenge we have today.

And that is what the gospel is all about, affirming the traditional theology of Judaism while at the same time reaching to the Gentile world and planting churches in Asia, Corinth, Ephesus, and so on. So the balance is tilted toward the future—because whether young and old, we all are moving into the future.

And so let us be flexible and move forward with faith into the deep unknowns, carrying the same old message of the Gospel through new forms and style and language of the current day.

So if you please, with that in mind please let me lay a concise roadmap for this year.

1. Our worship time will remain much more liturgical with the hymns liturgical formalities while at the same time we will strive to embrace the enthusiasm and exuberance of contemporary flavor that mark the worshipful energy of today. While we will maintain the formalities of the old we will adopt to the form and the strokes of the present. The worship time will be utilized in a timely manner.

But there is more than that.

2. We will see much more performance and activities of the young and youthful in ways that are meaningful and appropriate for them in their interpretation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
3. Next, this year and from the very start we are resurrecting the previous goal for membership drive with a specific target of not less than 200 more new members by December 31, 2012. It seems to tell us in scripture that "If you've got the Spirit you've got to move." Men vs Women, Teams, sides, left and right. Groups!!!
4. And this is the fun(d) part: We will be deliberate in funding the church because it is a biblical principle to store up goods in the storehouse ready to be used then to scramble around in time of needs. Therefore I propose the first trial plan as this: Every first Sunday Men vs Women in giving. Half of the intake that day goes to benevolent.

So we thank God for this New Year, and it is by divine guidance that our anniversary falls in the first month of the year, thus remind us of the new beginning and new challenges and new blessing we have ahead of us.

If we must achieve this then we much hold together, support, each other, forgetting the egos of the past, the fight of the past, (Paul says forgetting those things that are behind me), the envy, the

bickering, of the past, and reach forth for those things that are before us, so let us run the race that is set before us shoulder to shoulder, hands in hand, with love in our hearts and faith in God, let us reach out for those things that are before us.

God bless you and Happy New Year.

with integrity for our own times - while never letting go of their hands. In that familiar story of the dry bones, God does not breathe life into new bones, it is old bones that come back to life again. New life (new flesh) on old bones together.