

The context in which Jesus was speaking . . .
 was that of the conflict between the gospel and older
 Jewish traditions and institutions.
 The incompatibility of Christian freedom with
 Jewish legalism.
 Jesus' ministry was a "new beginning" so to speak.

Immediately prior to Jesus' analogies . . .
 he was taken to task for not fasting like the Pharisees . . .
 or even like the disciples of John the Baptist.
 Jesus was the new cloth on the old.
 He was in conflict with the tradition.

Immediately following Jesus' analogies . . .
 he was taken to task for not keeping the Sabbath.
 He was the new wine in the old skins.
 Again, he was in conflict with the tradition.

The fresh eggs of the Christian gospel,
 Christian freedom,
 Christian joy . . .
 did not taste good to those whose taste buds
 were used to the old eggs of traditionalism,
 the conventional,
 the establishment.

Jesus is saying, "Wake Up and Taste the Eggs."

Religious people have a passion for the old.
 We sing, "Give me that ol' time religion . . .
 it's good enough for me."
 But is it?

The two illustrations stand in an interesting juxtaposition.
 One, the new cloth, pulls and tugs the old as it shrinks.
 The other, the wine, expands and grows as it ferments.
 in old brittle wine skins.
 I don't think that comparison was an accident.
 In the New Beginnings process we must be careful that
 the old traditions aren't so dry and brittle so as not to
 hold the new wine of the gospel.
 Likewise we must be careful not to pull and tug with new
 forms so as to rip apart traditions that are solid and
 meaningful.

Both illustrations call us to be open to the movement of
 God's Spirit.

Jesus' context in giving his two parables . . .
 was that of older traditions and institutions.
 Our context today . . .
 in reading the same two parables . . .
 is that of the New Beginnings initiative on
 which we are about to embark.

This church will be going through a process . . .
 that will bring a new vision and new directions.
 Every member of this congregation will have a
 opportunity to be a part of that process.

There are some fresh eggs arriving on the ship.
 Some of those fresh eggs . . . there is no doubt about it . . .
 will smell and taste quite different from the old eggs.
 They will be eggs not of nostalgia . . .
 you know the mantra . . .
 "But we've always done it that way!"
 Instead they will be the eggs of vision . . .
 new directions,
 renewed hope,
 eggs of the future.

Now I have not been a part of this church long enough to
 have much of an idea of what those new eggs might be.
 But in looking at the larger picture of the church . . .
 I find it interesting that we still call our major
 educational work Sunday School . . .
 when Sunday is an old egg . . .
 a day understood very differently in today's culture.

Much church music is that of past centuries . . .
 most all good, solid music . . .
 but fresh eggs needs to be added to the scramble.

Much of the Bible study in our churches is based on
 scholarship of the past century . . .
 if not the past several centuries.
 We need the fresh eggs of new historical and
 Biblical scholarship . . .
 from the likes of some of those scholars Bill
 quotes on Sunday morning.

I am in no way trying to predict what our new beginnings process
 will produce . . .

except to say the eggs will taste quite different from the old eggs of past years and decades.

We will long for some of the old eggs . . .

and we'll probably fry a few of them up . . .

but before long, I am confident, the fresh eggs will taste mighty good.

Wake Up and Taste the Eggs.

Amen.