

The Problem with Old Containers

A SERVICE OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

Muskingum Valley Presbytery | September 19, 2026 | 1 p.m.

First Presbyterian Church, New Philadelphia, Ohio

Sermon: "The Problem with Old Containers" - Rev. Dr. Asa J. Lee

Scripture: Mark 2:21-22

Congregational words appear in bold. Hymns provisionally use The Presbyterian Hymnal (1990), the blue hymnal.

Call to Worship

God has been faithful through every generation.

We gather to praise the God who holds our lives.

Christ meets us with mercy and calls us to follow.

We bring our gratitude, our weariness, and our hope.

The Holy Spirit gathers us into one body.

Let us worship God with open hearts and willing hands.

Hymn of Praise

"God of Our Life" - The Presbyterian Hymnal (1990), #275

Opening Prayer

Faithful God, you have accompanied your people through seasons of joy and uncertainty. Gather our scattered attention. Give rest to those who are weary and courage to those who are afraid. Through your Word and at your table, draw us close to Jesus Christ and to one another. By your Spirit, prepare us to hear, receive, and respond. Amen.

Grace Spoken

The mercy of God meets us before we know how to ask for it. Jesus Christ has entered our brokenness, borne our sin, and opened the way to life. Hear the good news: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

Thanks be to God. This grace is our beginning and our hope.

Responding to God's Grace

Trusting the mercy already given to us, let us tell the truth before God.

Merciful God, we confess that we sometimes cling to familiar ways because we are afraid. We confuse our comfort with your faithfulness. We protect our place at the table while overlooking those who have not been welcomed. We dismiss one another when patience and listening would cost us something. Forgive us, and free us to live in the grace you have already given. Teach us to honor the gifts we have received, to release what keeps us from loving our neighbors, and to follow Jesus together. Amen.

[Silence]

God's grace gives us room to begin again. Let us walk in that freedom.

Sharing the Peace of Christ

The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

[Share a sign of Christ's peace with those around you.]

Prayer for Illumination

Living God, by your Spirit open the Scriptures to us. Give us ears to hear Jesus, humility to be challenged, and courage to respond. Bless the reading and preaching of your Word, that together we may follow where Christ leads. Amen.

Scripture - Mark 2:21-22

21 No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made.

22 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but new wine is for fresh wineskins."

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Sermon

"The Problem with Old Containers"

Rev. Dr. Asa J. Lee

[Dr. Lee preaches the sermon. A brief silence follows.]

Affirmation of Faith

We trust in the living God, who creates and sustains us.

We follow Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, who forgives our sin, gathers us into one body, and calls us to love our neighbors.

We depend on the Holy Spirit, who opens the Scriptures, equips the church, and leads us in the way of Christ.

Held by God's grace, we offer our lives for the healing of the world. Amen.

Prayers of the People

God of compassion, we bring before you the world you love.

For people living amid war and violence; for those forced from their homes; for all who hunger for bread, safety, and a place to belong: bring protection, just peace, and neighbors willing to help.

God of mercy,

hear our prayer.

For those who are ill, grieving, lonely, or exhausted; for caregivers and all whose suffering goes unseen: grant comfort, companionship, and the care they need.

God of mercy,

hear our prayer.

For the congregations and leaders of Muskingum Valley Presbytery; for communities celebrating new beginnings and those grieving endings; for students discerning a call and teachers who accompany them: strengthen our life together in Christ.

God of mercy,

hear our prayer.

For our work today: help us speak truthfully, listen generously, attend to those with less power, and seek our neighbors' good. Give us wisdom to recognize what serves your mission and courage to respond when you call us to change.

God of mercy,

hear our prayer.

[Silence for other prayers.]

Receive these prayers, gracious God, and make us ready to take part in your answer; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn at the Table

"I Come with Joy" - The Presbyterian Hymnal (1990), #507

Invitation to the Lord's Table

This is the table of Jesus Christ. He is our host, and his grace is the gift we receive. We come with the faith we have and the hunger we carry, trusting his welcome.

Here Christ nourishes his people and joins us to one another. Come, receive the gifts of God, and be strengthened to share his life in the world.

Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Faithful God, we give you thanks. You made the world in love and gave it life. You called Israel into covenant, delivered your people from slavery, and fed them in the wilderness. Through prophets you called them to justice and mercy. Through generations of promise and struggle, your steadfast love has endured.

With your people in every place and time, and with all creation, we praise you:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

We thank you for Jesus Christ, born among your covenant people. He welcomed those pushed aside, shared meals with sinners, healed the suffering, and announced your reign. When resistance and violence closed around him, he remained faithful in love. Crucified and buried, he was raised by your power. His life opens a future we could never make for ourselves.

Remembering his life, death, and resurrection, we offer you our praise and our lives, and proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and upon this bread and cup. As we receive these gifts, make us sharers in the body and blood of Christ. Unite us with him and with all who belong to him. Nourish the faith that has been entrusted to us, and give it room to grow into patient courage, generous welcome, and practical love.

Remember your whole church, those present and those absent, and those whose names are known to you alone. Keep us in communion with all your saints until we feast together in your promised kingdom.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory are yours, almighty God, now and forever.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Words of Institution and Breaking of the Bread

On the night of his betrayal, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

[The presider breaks the bread.]

In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, poured out for you. Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me.

[The presider lifts the cup.]

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

The gifts of God for the people of God.

Communion of the People

[The presider explains the serving arrangements and how anyone who remains seated will be served. The bread and cup are shared.]

Words for serving the bread: "The body of Christ, given for you."

Words for serving the cup: "The blood of Christ, shed for you."

[Instrumental music or silence may accompany communion.]

Prayer after Communion

Gracious God, you have met us in your Word and fed us at your table. We thank you for the life we share in Jesus Christ. Carry the grace of this meal into our conversations, our decisions, and our life among our neighbors. Give us courage to follow you, tenderness toward one another, and hands ready to serve. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn of Sending

"Called as Partners in Christ's Service" - The Presbyterian Hymnal (1990), #343

Charge and Blessing

Go into the work before you as people loved and fed by Christ. Honor the faith entrusted to you. Listen for the Spirit's leading. Make room in your life together for the neighbors God gives you.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Amen.

Scripture: The Shared Word Translation, Mark 2:21-22, Church Commons; CC BY 4.0. Hymn titles and numbers refer provisionally to The Presbyterian Hymnal (1990). Hymn lyrics and music are not reproduced. Prayers and affirmation composed for this service; traditional responses and the Lord's Prayer retained.