

## **Sermon Notes:Stretching SZN (season)** Pastor Zac Cain

At St. Marys Church, we are going deeper, and part of that journey requires that we be stretched in our faith. There has already been stretching going on this year, but there is more to come: there will be fresh wine and a new anointing for anyone who desires it.

**Matthew 9:14, 16, 17** Wineskins were made from tanned goat skins. When new wine was poured into them, the wineskins stretched with the fermentation. If they were new, there was no problem. If, however, they had been used, they'd developed a hardened, leathery texture, and new wine poured into them would cause them to burst. The new wine in Jesus' parable refers to the Holy Spirit. WE are the wineskins, and we must be flexible in order to be stretched. Consider a balloon. What happens when air is breathed into it? It expands to hold the air. We, too, must expand IF we want the Holy Spirit to move in our lives and in our church. If you're not going through this stretching yet, get ready. It's on the way.

What do you remember about cartoon characters who are/were "stretchy?" There's Gumby, and Mr. Fantastic, Mrs. Incredible, and Stretch Armstrong. They're stereotypically stretchy. Just as our patience must be tested for it to grow, our faith must be stretched for IT to grow.

In sports, stretching before a workout or a competition is important so that muscles don't fail in the big moment. Small tests of patience (a car breaking down, a computer freezing up, a flat tire) help us become more patient. Small tests of faith do the same for *that* fruit.

Are we perfect all the time? No. The apostle Paul understood the struggle. He wrote about it in his letter to the Romans. **Romans 7:15-25**. He did things he didn't want to do, and he didn't do things he knew he should; he knew the only solution to the dilemma was Jesus Christ. Maturity doesn't come with age; it comes with stretching. In the stretching, there may be

a tendency to move away from God. Don't. More *toward* Him.  
His ways and His thoughts are higher than ours. (**See Isaiah  
55:8-9**)

How do we survive the stretching? We choose to be like a rubber band: flexible. A rubber band, if not used, dries up and becomes brittle. It loses its purpose. We, too, will lose our purpose, individually and as a church, if we refuse to stretch. Consider the man with the withered hand (**Mark 3:1-6**) When Jesus commanded him to stretch out that dried and shriveled hand, he did. Restoration replaced the devastation.  
How might God be asking you to stretch?