

When You Don't Understand

by Detlef Stegen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual understanding and the dangers of grumbling in response to God's teachings and call.

Duration: 1:06:44

Scripture: Numbers 14:26-30, Nehemiah 1:4-11, Matthew 19:10-12, Matthew 19:23-26, John 4:23-24, John 6:44, John 6:60-66, Hebrews 3:15, Revelation 3:2-3

Topics: "Spiritual Understanding", "Repentance"

Description

This sermon delves into the challenging teachings of Jesus that caused his disciples to struggle and grumble, focusing on the importance of spiritual understanding and avoiding the sin of murmuring. It emphasizes the need to discern God's work in our lives, repent, and be open to spiritual truths even when they seem difficult to grasp. The narrative draws parallels to Nehemiah's response to God's call to rebuild Jerusalem's walls, highlighting the significance of humbling oneself, seeking God's mercy, and uniting as one in God's work.

Transcript

What had the disciples heard that they said, this is a hard saying, who can listen to it? He had said, unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. This, his disciples could not even grasp.

All the more difficult for those who called themselves Jews and called themselves believers, it was far above their reach. And it caused them to grumble. This sin of grumbling is a terrible sin amongst believers.

Terrible because it so easily sets in, so easily we are prone to murmuring. And this is a sin that Jesus easily picks up in our lives. And before he has heard it, he's already seen it in his followers.

And this sin, before you speak out, you're already murmuring in your heart. Yet Jesus had said something which they didn't understand. Has God come to you in ways you don't understand? What if a man would come up and say, unless you eat of my flesh and drink my blood, you have got no life within you.

You remain in death. And this man claims to be the Messiah. He claims to be the one sent by God.

He claims that he is doing the will of the Father. And this was the will of God, that Jesus should utter these words which needed a spiritual uptake, a spiritual understanding, a spiritual mind. And because they had no spiritual mind, they were offended by it and started murmuring and grumbling.

He says, the words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. Maybe you recount in your life, people may be instructing you, may be telling you things which were weird in your eyes, crazy, and you started murmuring in your heart. And maybe they don't speak about anything and they are instructing you, but God can even use a donkey to speak to a prophet, to a child of God, to a chosen one of God who is hard of hearing.

But if God has sent someone across your way, I say if it is God, and you have failed to read it spiritually, you maybe have started murmuring in your heart. And today you have become a grumbling Christian, a grumbling disciple of Jesus. And you maybe failed to grasp what Jesus is doing because you are in a state of grumbling, murmuring.

You say, no, the servant of God spoke the wrong things to me. He spoke of things which were eating of his flesh, drinking blood. And you took offence at it.

Until today, you are living a carnal life and not a spiritual life because you haven't accepted the words that are spoken to you that were spirit and were life. And maybe today you are careless, you aren't watchful anymore, you have blamed someone for having given you the wrong instruction. And maybe you say, that what he did, that what she did, that was not right.

And maybe the Lord has repeatedly spoken to you, but you wouldn't believe. And that's why this marvellous word where he says, this is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father. Maybe your instruction was a spiritual instruction and you took it up in the flesh.

You couldn't understand it. And maybe that was the beginning of your, I call it a downfall. Maybe it was an instruction to you personally with your own struggles.

Maybe it was a word directed to you as a married couple. Maybe it was an instruction to you regarding your own children. And you say, this is a hard saying.

Who can listen to it? And at that time God was drawing you unto himself. No one can come to me unless the Father draw him. Some people met Jesus once, received the word from Jesus once.

And it was a hard saying. They could say, who can listen to it? How is it possible? And maybe because you failed to listen to the instruction, you are at a loss, you are powerless. Your testimony has gone, has faded.

I would like to refer to Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. Maybe since that time, your walls have started crumbling. The glory of the Lord is in you.

You have departed. You have justified yourself. You have used wonderful words to decorate your life and your actions.

But if we remember these Jews who had been chosen by God to be his nation. I read even last night where Jesus himself says, salvation came and is through the Jews. I want to say it correctly, when Jesus met the woman at the well, where she said, our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place.

Where people ought to worship. And Jesus said to it, woman, believe me. The hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

Let us skip a verse, but the hour is coming and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. So she also had her reasoning and her theology was right. She had all her arguments in place.

She knew every answer to what Jesus was saying. But Jesus knows what is going on in our hearts. And this woman who was living with and without husbands, talking so piously when Jesus talked about the right, the real issue was, you want to experience to worship God in spirit, then you go, you go and call your husband.

Things need to be put right in your life. ... So it is good if we examine our lives. Whether it wasn't the case, whether there wasn't a time in our life, or maybe there is a time now in our life that we are murmuring and grumbling over the wrongs that the servants of God have told us.

... .. As his disciples said, this is a hard saying. This can't be true. And many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

... And how many have turned away, being offended by words, by actions that they could not accept, and they said this is a hard saying. ... I want to say this reverently. They may be said the wrong thing, or to you, you interpreted as the wrong thing, but they were speaking spirit and truth.

That's what the aim was. And even if they used the wrong words, and used the wrong actions, and did the wrong thing, did you interpret it in the spirit and in truth, or did you call it a lie? They were right. In the Old Testament, there's no way we should drink blood.

There's no way we should eat flesh, human flesh. And when Jesus came and said that, they said this is not right. There's no biblical evidence to what Jesus is saying.

... .. So we stand in great danger. ... If we fail to understand what the Spirit is telling us, ... If we fail to allow the Lord's Spirit to enlighten us, and that I can say the Lord's servant is speaking like this, he's exaggerating like this, he's using the wrong words, so that I will see what the Spirit is saying to me.
... Lest we find ourselves in a similar predicament that the children of Israel were, that were saved by a miraculous hand out of Egypt, ... and then suddenly difficulty, no water to drink, no food to eat, What was their reaction? Moses, why did you lead us out of Egypt? ... They started murmuring within and pointing fingers.

... .. May the Lord save us from pointing fingers. If maybe it comes personally to you, to your home, to your family, and you suffer, and then you start pointing fingers. And our murmuring, God is still a righteous God, it awakens his wrath, and his anger.

... .. And God got to a point where he swore and said, not one of these men who have been saved out of Egypt will enter the promised land. Not one of them, and they had to circle and wander in the wilderness for 40 years, till every man was dead. Today we can take it lightly, oh, I can believe if I want to, if I don't, it's okay.

... .. Jesus said, do you want to go away, or do you want to stay? He gives me the choice. But the pity is we cannot see God's heart, and when his wrath is wakened, and that he swears and says not one

of them will enter into the promised land. ... We can say, I can choose the Lord when I wish to.

Now these preachers, they haven't convinced me yet. ... I'm still, I'm still okay as I am, I have no need. ... And then you also speak things which are things that will maybe bind you, and you will have to suffer much because of the words that you have spoken and bound yourself by.

... Thanks to the Lord for his word that we can hear today, and he gives us, asks us to decide. The choice is ours, do you want to go away as well? ... If God knocks, don't harden your heart. ... If there are things that you don't understand, then be very careful, and say, Lord, keep me now.

I need to understand this through your spirit, not through my flesh, not through my thinking or understanding, and rather hold your peace, lest you say something which will be a chain and a lock around your ankles. ... And this is a wonderful time in which we live. God is speaking to us.

God is working amongst us. Do you see it? Do you hear it? And maybe in a way that he has never worked before. And if your eyes are closed, or your heart is closed to it, then go to someone and say, whisper into my ears what God is doing, because I am blind.

I don't see anything. ... I've come to see miracles, and I didn't see any. ... God is at work.

Are you part of it? God is busy building the walls of his Jerusalem. Let me share with you of a man who also was drawn by God. ... It was Nehemiah, but Israel at the same time.

God can raise up people for his purpose at the right time. You need not be alone. ... And God can touch kings.

... Israel had sinned, and Jerusalem's walls were broken down, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem were taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar. ... Did I say it correctly? I will make some mistakes, so you will have to excuse me and correct me after the service. ... And then during the exile, ... God raised up another king, King Cyrus.

... And I speak to you as a father, and I speak to you as a mother. God has raised you up to take a position in your family, in your circle. There's something that he has planned.

... God's power is unlimited. ... When Nehemiah heard from his brethren the state of Jerusalem, what did it cause within him? ... When Jesus comes to you and he speaks to you and he shows you your state of your own heart, of your soul, of your life ... way, that were fortified, that were in order, that the enemy could not come in even at night. Are your gates in place that allow entrance to your life, to your heart? Are they in place or have they been burnt down? That gates that also sift and only allow that out of your life, the gates of your mouth, the gates of your eyes that open to others, your words that go out to others, have they been burnt down or are they still in place? This was Nehemiah's visit by God.

He just asked a question and he got an answer from his brothers. And he knew this is God's time. He knew here is my chance.

He felt that God was drawing himself. Yes, he was drawing himself nigh unto himself. And he says, as soon as I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days and continued fasting and praying

before the God of heaven.

And if you react on God's call, on his bidding, on his drawing power, then you can also pray prayers that you have never prayed before. And your prayer won't just be a ritual. And your going to church won't just be a ritual.

And your day, waking up in the day, won't just be a ritual. You will receive something and your words will utter something which you have never, your mouth will utter words which you have never maybe spoken before. And the first thing he did was pleading for mercy.

Can you read it? I said, oh, Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments. Let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel, your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned.

We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, the rules that you commanded your servant Moses. Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses saying, if you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples. But if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen to make my name dwell there.

They are your servants and your people whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. Let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name and give success to your servant today and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. Now I was capybara to the king.

Now he says, then he came to the king, appeared before the king and he said, I have never been said in the presence of the king before. And the king asked him, why is your face sad? Seeing you are not sick, this is nothing but sadness of the heart. This such a king we must pray for who can discern that God is at work, that this is a man who has got a message from God to me and for me.

And we through Christ have, the Bible says, we've been made kings and priests unto our God. You king, can you discern when God is at work? Can you discern when the Lord is busy in the heart of your child? Do you trample it? Do you stamp on it? Do you reject it? Can you discern when this is now the devil? He wants to ruin this life. I need to take all caution and precaution and I need to be hard against this evil that is setting in in this life.

Because this enemy is going to destroy the walls of the very life of your child. And then Nehemiah says, I was very much afraid when the king spoke these words to me. Then he said, why shouldn't I be sad when the place, the city of my father's lies in ruins and its gates have been destroyed by fire? The king said, what are you requesting? Now listen to Nehemiah, so I prayed to the God of heaven and the Lord gave him the words to speak.

And from one step to the other, Nehemiah relies on the Lord, being commissioned and sent by this heathen king to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Now understand me correctly, we cannot, we cannot build the city of our Lord. It is, it is built.

He's, all it is at his disposal. The Lord commands and it, and it happens. But if it pleases him that you are a vessel to be used, do you respond? Is your heart inclined? Do you understand his language? And sometimes he asks you things that are maybe difficult.

And you say, how, how can I ever accomplish that? One day the Lord also said, it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter heaven. And the disciples said, who then can be saved? Now you don't have only, there are many riches. Maybe you are rich in yourself.

You don't want to be told, you want to be boss of your life. So you are very rich in yourself, in your own convictions. Allow me to live my own life.

I don't need to be told what to do. And you can be rich in possessions. All your ideals, everything you wish to do.

All the stories you wish to tell, nobody has got the stories that you have. You are full of riches, full of stories. All your history of your own life, others tell about, you know, you don't even know what happened to me.

And you know what I did, and you know how I hit, and you know how I could somersault. You know how that guy looked after I had, after I was finished with him. You know it all.

Some people come and they beg and they say, please, you know, I've, since this morning, I've been asked to sell these things, and no one has bought anything, just something to eat, you know. And they are so convincing, that you nearly run after him, and then you look, and then you see his back pocket is full of money. So even if he asks for something, he's rich, he can promise you, God will bless you, give brother, God will bless you.

You are full of yourself, full of advice, full of an answer for any and every situation. You are full of possessions, full of yourself. You are full of an answer for any and every situation.

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Another time the disciples heard from the Lord about marriage and about taking another wife, divorcing and taking another wife, and when Jesus told them the truth, they said, if that is the case, why should one even marry? Many people wish to get married and some people must maybe confess that I said, well God's will for my life is this, but when they come, when God draws them unto Him, they say, I spoke about God's will and I didn't know what I was speaking about. I once also said when I was in matric, I told my schoolmates, they mocked me and said, ah, you will never marry. And I said, I will marry when God wills, when it's God's will.

But I never knew what would be God's will, how God's will would be revealed to me. I didn't have an idea of it. But I thank God that I just uttered those words and those are sure words, if you abide by them and keep them and that they are not mere lip service.

And I can maybe tell you some secrets. When I said I felt this is God's will for me, that I should get married to the wife that I have, this person said, all right, I won't tell you whether it is or whether it isn't. But we will look at your life and the life that you have lived after marriage will prove to us whether that was God's will

or not.

And young people, if you one day want to stand before the congregation and profess and confess God's will to your partner, we want to see the fruit of it. We're not satisfied there. We say, all right, let us now see the good fruit that comes out of God's will.

So, beware, maybe there are many eyes on your lives, they want to see the good fruit that testifies to your confession. And you say, I choose Jesus. There are unseen number of eyes on your life who will now discern, is this really Jesus or who is in his life? So, do you understand God's call? If the Lord is calling you to repair the walls in your life, are you like a near mire? First thing, you remember where you have fallen.

When Jesus came to save his people from their sins, he sent John the Baptist to prepare the way and his first message was repent for the kingdom of heaven is attend. And then Jesus himself, his first message was repent for the kingdom of God is attend. If God draws himself nigh unto you, the first thing you should bow and humble yourself.

And then remember, his spirit will remind you where you have fallen. He will show you the walls that need to be repaired, the gates that have been burnt down. And when we start rebuilding, the enemy will be against us.

But after they had completed the walls, then they gathered at the gates as one man. Do you want to be one with the children of God? To be as one man that you have the same mind and heart to rebuild the walls. God speaks to you, even Jesus can point at things which you maybe can't understand.

Be in the spirit to be able to hear that, to accept that it will be life to you. And we will live with him if we accept his drawing, his drawing, what shall one call it, his draw that he is drawing us with. So let us never be like those disciples that Jesus had to turn to and say, do you also want to leave? The deciding factor is, do you accept the Lord drawing you unto himself? Shall we pray?

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