

All That Jesus Taught Bible Study - Part 14

by Zac Poonen

Jesus teaches his disciples to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, emphasizing the importance of retaining the taste of heaven and letting our good works be seen by others.

Duration: 25:28

Scripture: Genesis 18:32, Jeremiah 5:1, Ezekiel 22:30, Matthew 5:13-17, John 8:12, John 9:5, John 17:11, Romans 8:4

Topics: "Discipleship", "Righteousness"

Description

This sermon delves into the teachings of Jesus, focusing on the importance of disciples understanding and embodying His commandments. It emphasizes the disciples' role as the salt of the earth, bringing a taste of heaven through their lives, and as the light of the world, shining forth the life of Jesus through good works. The sermon highlights the need for quality over quantity in discipleship, drawing parallels from biblical examples like Abraham, Jeremiah, and Elijah, who impacted their surroundings through their wholehearted commitment. It concludes with a call to fulfill the law of God internally through the Holy Spirit, surpassing the righteousness of external religious practices.

Transcript

We continue our study today in all that Jesus taught based on Matthew 28 and verse 20, where Jesus commanded us to go into all the world and every nation, make disciples and teach them everything that he had commanded. And since it's my own feeling that a lot that Jesus taught has not been demonstrated by Christian leaders and not taught sufficiently, I felt it would be good to take a study on this. And that's what we've been doing these past few sessions.

We come today to Matthew's Gospel chapter 5 and verse 13. Teach the disciples to do all that I commanded. We need to understand all that he taught to understand behind his teaching the commandments of Jesus Christ.

He turns to his disciples. Remember the Sermon on the Mount that we read in Matthew 5 is primarily to his disciples. Verse 1 of chapter 5, his disciples came to him and he taught them.

The multitude sat around listening. To his disciples he says, you are the salt of the earth. He didn't say that to the multitudes.

The multitudes are certainly not the salt of the earth. They don't have any salt. But the disciples are to be the salt of the earth.

Jesus was a great master of using word pictures. And he left it to us to understand the meaning behind them as we sought, as we seek for the inspiration and revelation of the Holy Spirit. You are the salt of the earth.

But if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty? It is good for nothing anymore except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. So what is the purpose of salt? Particularly in our food. He's talking about taste here.

Salt is used for many other reasons like to preserve fish and other things like that. For long periods they put it in salt. But he's not speaking here about the preserving power of salt.

He's talking about taste. We can't preserve the world from becoming rotten. It will become rotten because men's hearts are fully set on evil.

But in the church, he's talking about disciples who have retained the taste of heaven in their life. That means when you come in touch with this disciple, you taste something of heaven which is so different from what you see in the average person who tastes of this earth. What do I mean by tasting of heaven and tasting of the earth? A lot of people, when you meet them, all they can talk about is what's happening on the earth and what's the latest price of the stocks and shares and what calamity is happening here and what evil is happening there and etc, or the latest gossip concerning other people, all the evil that you can find about people and to share that and air that with others.

Now, this is the taste of the world. The taste of heaven is something that brings life and joy and peace and goodness and it's very rare to find people like that who got the life of Jesus bubbling up in them. They're like salt that give taste to their surroundings.

Just like, you know, in a bowl of food, you need very little salt. You don't even need one spoon of salt would be too much. In a bowl of curry and food, you need very little salt to give taste to the whole food if the salt is really powerful and good.

But if the salt is tasteless, then even if you put 20 spoons in it, it's not going to make any difference in the taste. So the point here is not quantity but quality. If the salt has become tasteless, he's not talking about quantity of salt here at all and thereby he's showing us that his disciples will always be small in number.

Here you have a plate of rice and curry. How much salt are you going to put in that whole plate of rice and curry? Not even half a teaspoon. You need very little salt to make that whole plate taste right.

And so the proportion of the amount of salt there compared to all of that food is about the size of true disciples on earth compared to the population of the world. And sometimes even the number of people in church, the true disciples are very few. But it's those true disciples who are the salt of the earth.

It's because of them that the earth is preserved from judgment. You remember in Sodom, the Lord told Abraham in Genesis and when Abraham was praying concerning Sodom, he said, supposing, Lord, you find only 10 righteous people in Sodom. Genesis 18 and verse 32.

The Lord said, I won't destroy Sodom if there are 10 righteous people in that city. 10 people were enough to preserve the city from being destroyed, but there were not 10. And so it was destroyed.

In Jeremiah's time, the Lord reduced that number even further. If you turn to the prophecy of Jeremiah and the Lord told Jeremiah in chapter 5 and verse 1, he says, roam to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem. You know, Jeremiah was prophesying at a time when Israel was about to be taken into captivity by the Babylonian king.

And that was God's punishment. But before that, Jeremiah went to prophesy, warned them. He preached for 40 years.

They wouldn't listen to him. But the Lord told Jeremiah, go through the streets of Jerusalem and see if you can find one man, not 10, one single man who does justice, who speaks truth. And I will pardon the whole city.

That's amazing. But there wasn't one. And so the whole city went captive.

Very often God is looking like that. You read in Ezekiel and chapter 22. Ezekiel was also a prophet at the time of Babylon.

And God says through Ezekiel in Ezekiel 22 and verse 30, I search for one man among all of them who should stand in the gap for me and build the wall, that I shouldn't destroy the land. But I found none. The same words.

It's not quantity. It's not 10,000 people. One man.

It's amazing what God can do through one man if he's wholehearted, radical. Think of Moses, one man in the Old Testament through whom God could deliver 2 million Israelites. There was nobody else in Israel who was fit to be the leader.

In Elijah's time, even though there was 7,000 people who did not bow the knee to Baal, a picture of 7,000 believers who don't worship idols. But there was only one man, Elijah, who could bring the fire down from heaven. It's the same proportion today.

You might find one believer among 7,000 believers who can bring the fire down from heaven through their ministry or their prayer or whatever. 7,000 may say I don't do this and I don't do that. Their testimony is negative.

I don't go to the movies and I don't drink and I don't gamble and I don't smoke cigarettes, etc. They don't worship Baal. But who can bring the fire down from heaven? One who lives before God's face like Elijah.

He had salt. Same in the New Testament. If you remove one man from that early church, the Apostle Paul, just remove him.

If he were non-existent. Can you imagine the loss that that church would have faced? The loss we would have faced with so much of Scripture missing? One man. Of course, God's work is not going to be hindered because one man fails.

But what I'm trying to say is, I mean, God could have used somebody else. But I see in Scripture that God accomplishes a lot very often through one single person who's wholehearted. More than 10,000

compromisers.

That is the point that's being emphasized when he tells his disciples, you're like salt. Don't ever complain. Oh, we are so few.

I remember a situation in our own church in Bangalore where more than one situation, we found a need to pray for the government, for the problems in the city. And we said, Lord, we're not a big church. But we have two good qualities in our midst.

One, we are pursuing holiness with all of our heart. We're not here to compare ourselves with others, but we can honestly say before God, we're sincerely seeking to pursue holiness and to please you in everything. We don't want to please men.

We don't want to worship money. We have no interest in money in our church. And so we don't worship mammon.

We worship Christ. And the second thing is to the best of our ability and knowledge, we were one with each other. We were not a church full of strife and quarrels and disputes and cliques and et cetera.

So we've got a pursuit of holiness and unity. And those are the things God looks for. Because if I regard iniquity in our heart, the Lord will not hear us.

Psalms 66, 18. And when two are united, Matthew 18, verse 19 and 20, said, you can ask for anything because the Lord is in the midst. So I said, we've got purity.

We've got unity. So you've got a right to answer out. We've got the right to get an answer to our prayer.

And we've got that answer many a time in many miracles that God has done. How does God do these things? Through a few people who have not lost the taste of radical righteousness, purity, and fervent love, pursuing humility, et cetera. So keep this in mind.

You're the salt of the earth. Then he said, you're the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do men light a lamp and put it under the peck measure, Matthew 5 and verse 15.

But on the lampstand, it gives light to all that are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way they may see your good works and glorify your father who's in heaven. Light is another illustration, that picture, that word picture that Jesus used.

A bulb, for example, or in those days, a lamp. The wick of a lamp is a very, very small thing. A bulb is a very small thing, but it lightens up a whole room.

The wick of a lamp in those days was so small, but as it burned, it lit up the whole room. It was not the size of the wick or the size of a bulb, but the intensity of light that would come forth from it. Again, the emphasis is not on quantity, but quality.

We have zero watt bulbs, which emit such a dim light that you can hardly see anything from it. And then we have powerful bulbs about the same size, halogen bulbs, which light up a whole street. So a bulb can be a very low wattage or very high wattage.

The importance is not the size, but the power, the intensity of power with which you can light up something. And Jesus says, you're the light of the world. The world is in darkness.

There must be nothing of that darkness in me. If I'm a bulb and the darkness in the world is in me, then I'm like a fused bulb. A lot of churches have got Christians who are like fused bulbs.

Once upon a time they were burning, but they're fused, they're backslidden, and the light is not shining anymore. What is that light? It says here, let your light, let your people see your good works and glorify your father in heaven. In those days, light came through a lamp that was constantly burning with oil being supplied for the wick to burn.

And that oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit. See one mark of a person anointed with the Holy Spirit is that he does good. It says in Acts chapter 10 and verse 38 that when Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power, he went about doing good.

He didn't go around collecting money from people for his ministry, like a lot of so-called anointed preachers do today. He was exactly the opposite of that. He went around doing good, and he never charged for it.

People voluntarily gave him gifts without his asking. He accepted it, but he would never make his needs known to anyone. He went about doing good without any charge.

And here it says, let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and not glorify you. If you do good works to get honor for yourself and to get glory for yourself, that's actually darkness. And a lot of good works that many Christians do, advertising themselves and getting honor for themselves or their organization or their ministry, is actually darkness.

Because there's no glory that goes to the father in heaven. The glory comes to that particular organization or that particular man. Let people see your good works and it says here, glorify your father in heaven.

That is a true light, where a person is doing good and as a result of that, Christ is glorified and not the individual. This is what it means to manifest light. In John chapter 1, this light is described like this.

John 1.4, in Jesus Christ was life and that life was the light of men. So the light is not a doctrine. It's not a teaching.

It's not a particular message. It's a life. It's the very life of Jesus coming forth from us through the Holy Spirit.

That is what the light is. Like that old lamp was lit with the oil. The light, the life of Jesus coming forth from us, that is the light.

Now it's very interesting to see that Jesus said in John 8 and verse 12, I am the light of the world. He said that very clearly and he is the light of the world. He who follows me shall never walk in darkness.

Whenever a person is walking in darkness, according to John 8.12, we can say that that person is not following Jesus, without a doubt. If any of you are saying, well, I'm a bit dark right now. Well, you may not be following Jesus.

That's why. I'm not saying that you're confused about God's will. Even Jesus was confused about the Father's will, perplexed in the garden of Gethsemane.

That's why he prayed for one hour, Father, what is your will? Should I drink this cup or not? That's not darkness. Perplexity is part of the life of faith, but darkness is something else. Something contrary to the life of Jesus.

He who follows me will never walk in darkness, but have the light of life because I'm the light of the world. But then he went on to say in John 9 and verse 5, that I am the light of the world for a certain period of time, 33 and a half years. That's all.

John chapter 9, verse 5, while I'm in the world, I'm the light of the world. And how long was he in the world for 33 and a half years? Well, people may be super spiritual and say, well, isn't Christ in the world right now? Well, if you read in John chapter 17, he says in John 17, verse 11, I am no more in this world. We've got to get rid of our super spirituality.

When Jesus left this earth and went to heaven, this is on the eve of the cross. He says, I'm no more in the world. But these disciples are here in the world.

They are in the world, but I'm no more here. I'm going. I'm coming to you.

And I'm coming to you, Holy Father. I'm not in the world anymore. So when he said in John 9, that as long as I'm in the world, he was talking about that 33 and a half year period where he manifested life.

So after he's gone, now he's gone up to heaven, who is the light of the world today? Turn back to Matthew 5 and verse 14. You are the light of the world. So if somebody were to ask me, who is the light of the world? The right scriptural answer would be to say me.

I'm the light of the world and others who follow Jesus. Have you ever thought of it like that? Have you ever thought of answering that question? Who is the light of the world by saying me and others who follow Jesus? That is the right answer. It's very easy to say, oh, not me.

Just look at Jesus. But he's not on the earth. He said, I'm the light of the world only as long as I'm in the world.

See, so many Christians haven't read the scriptures properly and they've got all types of wrong ideas which are in their head, which is from their own understanding. And they're completely wrong. Just like God depended 100% on Jesus Christ during those 33 years to manifest his light perfectly.

He's depending on his church, his disciples on earth to manifest that same light now perfectly. Let people see your good works and glorify your father who's in heaven. Turn back to Matthew 5 and verse 17.

Don't think that I came to abolish the law of the prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. You know, the fundamental principle behind God's law is his life.

In the law, he was in a limited way putting into writing what his nature was like. The absence of idolatry and giving God the first place and honoring father and mother, never hurting other people with murder, adultery, or any such thing, etc., etc., was a manifestation of the life of God in man. And Jesus manifested that life.

He says, I haven't come to abolish all that. The fundamental principle behind the law is never abolished. Some people misunderstand that verse to mean, therefore, well, we should keep the Sabbath as well.

Well, it's the principle behind that the Lord was speaking about here. And he says, until heaven and earth pass away, not Matthew 5, 18, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the law till all is accomplished. He says, I've come to fulfill the law.

And then he goes on to say, if you cancel one of the least of these commandments and teach other people that some commandment is unimportant, you'll be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But if you keep them and teach others to keep even the least commandment, you'll be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Now, is he referring to the Ten Commandments or the commandments of Moses, killing lambs and offering peace offerings and grain offerings and sin offerings? They were all there in the Old Testament.

We can't pick out one. But we see that these commandments, these commandments, these laws were fulfilled in Christ. So when he's speaking about the least commandment in the law, he's talking about the spirit of the law.

Let me turn you to Colossians in chapter two. In Colossians chapter two, he says here, don't let anyone act as your judge, Colossians 2, 16, in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day, because all these things are a shadow, including the fourth commandment of keeping the Sabbath. He says it's literally a shadow.

It's fulfilled in Christ. Or in today's language, you could say it's like a photograph. Until Christ came, you needed the photograph.

See, if I'm not traveling with my wife, I may carry her photograph with me and look at it. But if I'm traveling with my wife, why do I need to look at the photograph? There's something wrong with a man who's traveling with his wife and still looks at the photograph. So the law is over.

Now that Christ has come, he says that was only a shadow. That is, it's an accurate picture of Christ. Many things in the Old Testament accurately portrayed Christ.

But it's only a photograph. It's only a picture. It's a shadow.

The reality is in Christ. So we need to keep that in mind when we think of Jesus speaking about fulfilling the law. The Sabbath was fulfilled.

And now it's the inner Sabbath that the Lord is seeking to bring into our hearts. Come to me and I will give you rest. That inner rest that comes as we take his yoke upon us.

I just mentioned that because some people think of that as the one commandment that should never be canceled. No, the fulfillment of the law is now through the Holy Spirit inside our hearts. In Romans and chapter 8, this is explained like this.

The righteous requirement of the law, Romans 8.4, is now fulfilled inside us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit. This is how the law is fulfilled, Romans 8.4. We've got to compare scripture with scripture. The law will not pass away.

He did not come to abolish but to fulfill. And it must be fulfilled in us. How is it going to be fulfilled in us, Romans 8.4? The righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us when we don't walk according to the flesh but according to the Holy Spirit every single day.

It's not by keeping a Sabbath or keeping some of those commandments. So this is something we've got to keep in mind. And finally, he says, unless your righteousness, Matthew 5.20, exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

And that we will study in our next study because he's explaining that further in the remaining verses. But remember this, that Jesus Christ came to fulfill the law. And even in our lives, the law of God is to be fulfilled in our hearts.

In the Old Testament, they fulfilled it externally in various ways. He kept the outside of the cup clean. But it's the inside that God is interested in now.

We are to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world and that life has to come from the Holy Spirit from within. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, as we bow before you, we seek for clarity now in understanding the truth of your word so that we don't get bogged down in ritual but live in the reality of the life of Christ.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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