

All That Jesus Taught Bible Study - Part 36

by Zac Poonen

Jesus calls us to live in the new covenant, a relationship with God based on love and compassion, rather than trying to live the old covenant life with rules and regulations.

Duration: 24:38

Scripture: Hosea 6:6, Matthew 6:16-18, Matthew 9:9, Matthew 9:12-13, Matthew 9:15-17, Matthew 28:20, John 8:1-11

Topics: "Discipleship", "Holy Spirit"

Description

This sermon delves into the teachings of Jesus, focusing on the call to make disciples and the importance of following the promptings of the Holy Spirit. It emphasizes the selection of apostles from their workplaces, highlighting the need for sacrifice and the depth of understanding that comes from secular work experience. Jesus' interactions with sinners and Pharisees illustrate the importance of compassion over sacrifice and the incompatibility of old covenant practices with the new covenant life.

Transcript

We continue our study today on all that Jesus taught by his actions, by his life, and by his words. To fulfill the command given us in Matthew 28 verse 20, go into every nation, make disciples, baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and then for the rest of their lives, teach them to do every single thing I have taught you or commanded you. So Matthew chapter 9 and verse 9, as Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting in the tax office, and he said to him, follow me, and he rose and followed him.

Jesus did not call everybody to be an apostle. I told you earlier how he lived by the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and so he would be always listening to the Holy Spirit. His whole life, the antenna was up to receive messages from heaven.

This is how we are supposed to walk to, led by the Holy Spirit, and as he moved around, the Spirit of God would point out a certain person. So you've got to call him to be an apostle. It's amazing how the Lord can do that even today.

In his sovereignty, he leads us to individuals who are to be our co-workers in the ministry God has entrusted to us, so that we can pass on to them what God has taught us, so that they can continue the work. It is God's will that we pass on, particularly to the next generation, all that God has entrusted to us. Those of us who are ministering the word, that's been my own burden for a long time.

I want to pass on to others all that God has taught me, so that they can benefit from it, and Jesus selected his apostles like that. He saw Matthew, and there was a prompting in his heart, call him. There were many other people sitting there collecting taxes.

Matthew was not the only one, but he went goes to Matthew and called him, just like he went to the shores of Galilee, where there were lots and lots of fishermen, and he called Peter, Andrew, James, John, four, and the others can continue with their fishing. So Matthew, he saw him sitting in the tax office, and he said, follow me, and it's amazing. Matthew rose and followed him.

Can you picture this in your mind? Here's a man who's probably a chartered accountant, whatever he was in those days, writing out his accounts, and he's in the tax office, where they're always busy keeping their accounts up to date, and Jesus walks in and tells him, follow me, and he drops his pen or whatever he was using to write, gets up, tells his boss, sir, I'm resigning. I'm following Jesus. Walks out.

He rose and followed him. That's quite amazing. I've often thought about this.

You know, when you read scripture, meditate, and put yourself in that situation, and see what you can learn from there. I would have thought, wouldn't it have been better if Jesus had gone to Matthew's house later in the evening, when he had finished work and come back home, and there, if it was written yes, Jesus went to the home of a man called Matthew, and Matthew was just relaxing there, and Jesus told him, come follow me. That would have sounded more reasonable, but a lot of things that sound reasonable to human reason are not God's ways.

God's ways are as different from man's ways as the heaven is above the earth, and that's what I need to learn from Jesus' action here. He has taught me something through this, and he's taught me to obey that in my own life, and I understand the reason to be this. I find that every single person whom Jesus called, he called from their place of work, whether it was James, or John, or Peter, or Matthew, or anyone.

If he had, if it was written that he had called them at home, we would not know whether they were unemployed people sitting around at home doing nothing, but every person he called to be an apostle was called from his place of work. There's not even a single exception to that in the Gospels. Teaching us one thing, that the Lord calls his apostles from their workplace.

He calls working people to be his servants. He is not calling lazy, unemployed people who've got nothing else to do to be his servants. People like Samuel in the Old Testament and Timothy in the New Testament are probably an exception.

We don't know whether Timothy was working or not, but the general rule in the New Testament is crystal clear. It's those who are working whom the Lord calls out to serve him full time. There's a reason for this.

I'm not saying there are no exceptions because this is not a law written somewhere in Scripture, but I see it from the examples of Jesus calling people. The reason is this, and I certainly see this in India, where you find so many people who are in Christian work today who never did one honest days of a secular job, and they were unemployed and they went to some Bible school and started serving the Lord, and you see the shallow quality of their work. Now when a person has been employed and well employed and he leaves that job in order to serve the Lord full time, there's a sacrifice involved.

He has to give up something which is a comfortable source of earning his income. He's going to lose that, and that would be a pretty good indication that perhaps God has called him. But if an unemployed person

is willing to get a job in a Christian organization, to be a preacher or to serve the Lord, how do you know whether God called him at all? He may be looking for employment.

He may be looking for a job in a country like India. There are thousands of people like that who are ready to join any Christian organization under the sun and to preach whatever doctrine you want them to preach, provided you pay them a monthly income. There are thousands of young men and women in India who would be willing to join any school.

Not because God's called them, but because they can perhaps have free boarding and education and get a degree as well. What more do they want? And then probably get a job as well in some Christian organization. That is one of the main reasons for the shallowness of a lot of Christian work in India today.

Matthew was called from his place of work. Every apostle was called from his place of work. Number one, because that would be a test of whether God has really called them.

A person would not give up a well-paying job, sacrifice it just for nothing, just for some empty dream. Though a person may be willing to take a risk to do that if he's unemployed because he's got nothing to lose. I'm already earning nothing.

I don't have a degree. I might as well try this out, so-called Christian work. And that's how with a lot of Christian workers today in India is exactly like that.

And that, as I said, is the reason for the shallowness of Christianity in India today. The second reason is this. It's only a person who's been working in a secular job who can know the pressures of what it is to work in a secular job.

It's not easy to work in a secular situation with difficult bosses, trials, temptations, the pressure of having to get up and go to work and come back late in the evening. A person who goes straight into full-time Christian work or become a pastor, he doesn't have that pressure of getting up at 6 30 in the morning like some working people have. Get ready quickly, catch a bus and go to work and make sure he's never late on any day and doesn't face the pressure of facing difficult bosses who yell and scream at them and ask them to do all types of difficult things and sometimes unrighteous things.

A pastor doesn't face that. And going week after week and a lot of people in India, you know, work six days a week. A lot of pastors just work one evening and one morning in a week.

That's about it. And that's a much easier job. Get up when you like and just prepare a few sermons and preach them twice a week and that's it.

So a lot of people like to quit their secular jobs and say, hey, that type of job doing a pastor is much easier. Jesus called people who are hardworking, who were faithful in their job because they would have experience of the struggles of earning a living. That's why even Jesus, he was a carpenter.

He had to struggle to support his four younger brothers, two sisters and his mother, which is an eight-member family. He had to support and he worked and God, the Father, allowed him to be tested for a number of years in that way, 30 years before he sent him out to the ministry. So remember that, dear friends, that's one reason why Jesus called people at their place of work.

And it says here that as, you know, it Matthew wrote this gospel, by the way. He's talking about himself in the third person, called a man called Matthew. Matthew himself was writing it.

And then in verse 10 it says, it happened as he was reclining at the table in the house. Matthew doesn't tell us whose house it was, but we know from one of the other gospels that it was Matthew's own house. His other name was Levi.

That was his own house, but he's humble enough not to mention that. As Jesus was sitting at the table, they used to recline in the table those days. There were a lot of tax gatherers and sinners who were dining with Jesus and his disciples.

See, Matthew was a tax collector himself and he had a great feast in his house and all his friends, multitudes of tax collectors and he invited a lot of others who were all well-known sinners in the town and they were all dining with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, you see, Matthew must have been a pretty rich man to invite so many guests for a meal. And the Pharisees saw this.

They said to his disciples, why is your teacher eating with tax collectors and sinners? He said, everybody knows that tax collectors are crooks. They look for bribes. They try to harass people.

It happens even today. And you mean Jesus is friendly with such people? Jesus is friendly with sinners? And Jesus heard this and said, it's not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means.

I desire compassion and not sacrifice, for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners. You know, that's understandable. A healthy person doesn't need a doctor.

It's the sick people who need a doctor. So he's saying these people, whom you call sinners, whom you call cheating tax collectors, they are sick. They need my help.

And what about you Pharisees and scribes? Weren't they sick? They were more sick than anybody else. They had hypocrisy and pride, the worst sins of all, much worse than the others, but they were not aware of their need. And so the Lord's being sarcastic here.

There is a place for sarcasm in preaching. Jesus has taught us to be sarcastic in order to emphasize a point. He calls these terribly sick Pharisees as healthy people.

What's he meaning? You guys think you're healthy. Well, then you don't need me, right? That's what he's saying when he says, it's not those who are healthy, verse 12, who need a physician, but those who are sick. He's implying, you guys think you're healthy.

That's why I don't waste my time coming to you, but you're not healthy. You're more sick than these other people, but you don't realize it. But fortunately, these sinners, they realize they are sick.

It's more blessed to realize you're sick than to be sick and not know it. These other people know that they're sick, and so they want a doctor. I'm glad to go and help them.

And then the Lord spoke to the Pharisees directly and the scribes. You guys are so judgmental on these other people. Before you do all your many, many prayers, sacrifices, go and learn what this verse from the Old Testament means.

I desire compassion. I desire compassion and not sacrifice, for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. You see, that's a quotation from Hosea chapter 6, verse 6. God desires compassion more than sacrifice.

He says, I want you fellas to learn that it's not a lot of sacrifice I want from you. I want you to have compassion on people and not just judge them saying, oh, they're tax collectors. They're sinners.

We're not sinners like them. Jesus is always taking the side of sinners against the Pharisees. Remember the story of the woman caught in adultery? Pharisees on one side, the woman caught in adultery on one side, and whose side does Jesus take? Whom does he defend? He drives those Pharisees away and he tells the woman, I don't condemn you.

Does it mean he condones sin? Never, because he told the woman, don't ever sin again. He never condoned any sin, but he never condemned sinners either. And here again, you see the scribes and Pharisees on one side and the sick tax collectors and sinners on the other, and Jesus sides with them, defends them against the accusation of the Pharisees.

That's a great example for us because we find very few preachers who identify like that, who are the friend of sinners. A lot of preachers are the friends of rich people. Jesus was not the friend of rich people.

Pastors are friendly with rich people. They put them on the boards of their churches because they know they'll get money from them. Jesus wasn't interested in anybody's money, so he did not do that.

Further, it says in verse 14, the disciples of John came to him saying, why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples don't fast? That's another question. They were always coming up with some new question, and I personally thank God that they ask these questions because the wonderful answers of Jesus are written in the scriptures which instruct me today. So here's something wonderful.

Why do your disciples not fast? And Jesus replied to that. He said those who are attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them. See, he's the bridegroom.

And they were Jewish people who are the attendants of the bridegroom. As a church today, we are the bride. We're not the attendants of the bridegroom.

We're the bride of Christ. Those days, the church was not yet formed. They were the attendants of the bridegroom.

He says you can't fast when the bridegroom is there. One day the bridegroom goes away, then they will fast. And so we see that Jesus never commanded people to fast.

And we should not command people to fast like some preachers do. He just stated a fact that when the bridegroom is gone, they will fast. In Matthew 6, he said when you fast, make sure other people don't know about it.

He did not command people. Neither did he say if you fast as if it was an optional thing. Even here, it says they will fast.

He doesn't say when the bridegroom is taken away, they may fast. So that teaches us that one of the purposes of fasting is because, one of the reasons for fasting is because our bridegroom is absent. He's not here.

And it's an expression of our longing for someone whom we love so much. So in that sense, fasting is an expression of love for an absent bridegroom. That's what I learned from Matthew 9, verse 15.

The days when the bridegroom is taken away, they will fast. But he goes on to say in verse 16 and 17, again in the same context, no one will take a patch of an unshrunk cloth and put it in an old garment. We all know that in cotton clothes, when it's put in water, cotton tends to shrink.

So if there's a tear in a cotton dress and you get a new piece of cotton which has not been put in the water, and you cut out a piece and stitch it onto this dress or shorts or shirt or anything, as soon as it is put in water, that new patch begins to shrink. And that tears away the garment. So the point is that in the new covenant, that's the new garment, you can't get in the new covenant by taking a patch of it and putting into the old garment.

The old garment is the old covenant. And that's what some people are doing. It's a very interesting parable.

A lot of Christians live under the law. They are frightened where they're preachers that if you don't type, God will punish you. All types of rubbish like that.

They live under laws, but then they hear a new covenant message and say, hey, that's a good message. Let me take a patch from that and stitch it onto this. And so into this life of legalism that they already have, they hear some new truth about, oh, God is a father or we can overcome sin, something.

And let me patch it on to the old covenant. They don't want to give up the old covenant. Even though God has said the old covenant is abolished.

They have not abolished it in their own minds. They say, hey, there's some place for it. But we like this new thing that Brother Zack is preaching.

Let's take that and patch it on. He says it won't work. It'll tear the garment.

The results won't be good. Ultimately, it'll be worse. It's far better to just stick with that old garment.

What you need to do is throw away the whole garment completely. The wrong approach to fasting or any other thing. Here, the question was fasting.

Even in the small thing like fasting, there is an old covenant approach, which is the old garment, and a new covenant approach. The old covenant was a law. On certain days, the Israelites had to fast.

There are no two ways about it. But in the new covenant, there is no law that says you must fast. It just doesn't exist.

And it is if you fast, or when you fast, or they will fast. And we need to know that distinction because a lot of preachers today are forcing people to fast. Now, fasting is a very good thing as a discipline.

You know, like once a week to miss all your meals. Or if you can't do that, at least start with one meal, two meals, and go up to three meals. I think it's a very good discipline.

It frees us from the love of food. It gives us time to concentrate on something. And it gives us the opportunity to show God that we're really interested in what he has to give us.

So this passage is very relevant. But the point is, it must not be done in the old covenant way as a law. There's a difference between a discipline and a law.

And the other illustration he uses here, remember he's answering the question about fasting. Men do not put new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wineskins will burst and the wine pours out and the wineskins are ruined.

But they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and like that, both are preserved. Now this is a well-known example. When a wine is put into anything, it expands.

And if it is a wineskin in which they used to put it in the olden days, it stretches. But if it's put into an old wineskin which is already stretched, can't stretch anymore, it bursts. Again, the picture is old covenant versus new covenant.

The trying to live that old covenant life, trying to live this new covenant life, the new wine, in an old covenant system and approach of tithing and fasting and praying, the whole thing will explode. That's not the way we're supposed to live. Everything in the new covenant life must be put into the new covenant pattern.

The new covenant life must be in the new covenant church. We can't live the new covenant life in an old covenant church. And that's the mistake a lot of people are making.

They like this life, but they say let's add it on to our dead denominational church, which is an old covenant system. That's what Jesus is speaking of here, not only in relation to fasting, but in relation to praying and many other things. So let's take heed to these things and we'll continue in our next episode.

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