

All That Jesus Taught Bible Study - Part 37

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being led by the Holy Spirit in ministry and the necessity of responding to the needs of others with faith and flexibility.

Duration: 24:26

Scripture: Isaiah 30:21, Matthew 9:22, John 5:6, Acts 3:6, 1 John 2:6

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Faith Living"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit in ministry, highlighting Jesus' actions in responding to needs based on the Spirit's prompting. It discusses the need to be willing to have our plans interrupted to help those in need, while also being discerning about which invitations or opportunities to accept, following the example of Jesus. The sermon underscores the principle of living by faith and total dependence on God, rather than relying solely on knowledge or doctrines.

Transcript

Today we continue our study on all that Jesus taught, which we have been looking at from the very first Gospel, Gospel of Matthew, seeking to obey the command of the Lord in Matthew 28, verse 20, that we were to go into all nations and teach everyone to do all that Jesus commanded, which he taught through his words and by his life and actions. So today we are at Matthew chapter 9 and verse 9. We looked at this the last time and we saw that Jesus spoke to and called Matthew to his service and we considered that and how he speaks at the end about what true fasting is in the new covenant. We will move on to chapter 9 and verse 18 now, while he was saying these things, he was speaking about fasting as we just considered in verses 14 to 17, there came a synagogue official and bowed down before him saying, my daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her and she will live.

And Jesus rose and began to follow him and so did his disciples. And behold, a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for 12 years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak, for she was saying to herself, if I only touch his garment, I should get well. And Jesus turned and seeing her said, daughter, take courage.

Your faith has made you well. And at once the woman was made well. Now one thing we see here by Jesus' actions and there we learn something of what we are to do in our life as well.

He was willing to have his program interrupted by people in need. Sometimes we can have such a rigid program that we have made out for ourselves. It's good to have a program.

It's good to be disciplined so that we won't waste time in our life. But we must at times allow those programs of ours to be modified or changed depending on circumstances, situations, people who come who are in need. And if I'm so rigid in my program that I'm unwilling to interrupt it with anything that I won't even allow a person in need to interrupt me, then I'm more rigid than Jesus himself.

Jesus didn't have a fixed program laid out in the beginning saying nobody's going to disturb me. I'm going to do this. And if somebody needs something, he'll have to wait.

No. He was saying something. He was talking to people.

And he was engaged in something when someone came to him and said, please lay your hand on my sick child. And it says immediately, verse 19, Jesus rose up and went. And then on the way, a woman who was sick touched him and he stopped again and turned to speak to her and comfort her and encourage her.

This was his whole way of life. Nicodemus came and disturbed him probably at midnight, we read in John chapter 3. And Jesus opened the door of his house and said, come right in. Let's sit down and talk.

He was not bothered about how long Nicodemus would sit and his sleep would be disturbed or any such thing. This is a very important principle in the Lord's work. And anyone who is not willing to be inconvenienced like this and to change his program really will not be able to serve the Lord.

At the same time, we need the wisdom to know whether we should be, we should allow ourselves to be disturbed in some cases. That's where, once again, there's no law. What I've said just now is not a rule, it's not a law.

It's a principle, a guideline that we see in Jesus' life. But we must be sensitive to the Holy Spirit because there are multitudes of Christians and others who would like to disturb us day and night, particularly if our ministry expands. And we need to be sensitive to see which of those we should respond to and which we should not.

Those of us who are little, those of you who are more well-known among others in the ministry will maybe get a lot of invitations from here and there. And if you decide to respond to every single invitation you get, you'll miss God's will for your life. You need to know which of those you should accept and which of those you should not.

There were many invitations that Jesus rejected. I want to balance what I've said here now with something from Luke chapter 4, where we read at the end of this great revival, which we already considered in Peter's town when multitudes were healed and demons were cast out. We read in Luke chapter 4, verse 42, that early in the morning he departed and went to a lonely place, Luke 4, 42.

And he was praying there, obviously seeking the Father's will for the day. There had been a great revival the previous evening, and he was seeking, Father, do you want me to be here? It looks as if there's a great moving of the spirit here. And the multitudes kept searching for him, and they tried to keep him from going away from them.

What they told him was, Lord, we need you here. There's been a revival yesterday evening. People are experiencing a revival, unexpected revival like that.

Don't walk away from it. We've got to stay and build up on what the foundation you laid yesterday. But he said to them, no, I'm not going to stay.

He refused that invitation. I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities where I was sent for this purpose, and he went on. So I say that to show that Jesus didn't respond to every single invitation.

He knew which ones to accept and which ones to reject. So again, we come to that principle that I've been emphasizing from before. There are no laws in the new covenant.

We live by the Holy Spirit. We are led by the Holy Spirit in each particular case. So those who want to live by a rule or a law will make these principles that I'm teaching into laws and rules and seek to live by them and go completely out of the will of God.

There's one principle in the new covenant, basically. We must be led by the Holy Spirit, and those who are led by the Spirit are the sons of God. That's more difficult.

Man would rather live by a law. You know, when Adam was in the Garden of Eden, he could have chosen the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which is a picture of the law. The law teaches us what is good, what is evil.

There's nothing wrong with it. But it says those who try to live under the law will die spiritually. And the other was the tree of life, which symbolizes living by the power of the Holy Spirit.

So Adam had this choice, and Adam moved towards law. And the Israelites were 1,500 years under the law, and even though the law was abolished 2,000 years ago, and the Lord showed us in the Sermon on the Mount a higher principle to live by, an inner witness, Christians still seem to go back to the law. I'm not saying that the commandments are not important.

All I'm saying is you can obey those commandments in the spirit of the old covenant, the spirit of the law, according to the letter, and it'll kill. 2 Corinthians 3 says the letter kills, but the spirit gives life. And even the letter of the New Testament can kill if you try to follow it according to the letter.

Look at the number of denominations, cults that have come up by people concentrating on one verse in the New Testament or something like that. There's one principle we are called to live by. 1 John 2 says he who says he's a Christian must walk as Jesus walked, must live as Jesus lived.

So Jesus lived not according to laws. He lived by the principle of the witness of the spirit within him, and that is the most effective way to live. So I need to mention that so that we don't misunderstand that every person who calls us, we've got to interrupt what we are doing, cancel our program because somebody's called us to go and visit his home.

No. So if we can understand this principle, but we must be willing to be disturbed at any time. Any time.

I remember once in my own life when I was very busy writing a Christian article that I needed to finish because there was a deadline to send it to the printer. I heard a doorbell ring and somebody came to my door, and I opened the door, I found someone who I'd never met in my life, a total stranger, and he said, Brother Zach, I read a book of yours, young man, I want to have just a chat with you. I could have turned

him away from the door and said, hey, listen, I'm busy writing something, so Christian article I'm writing, so can you come back later? But he had come from out of town.

So I said, okay, come in. I thought he would sit for two or three minutes. But he sat for a long time, and as I listened to him, I saw that he was a person with need, and I could help him.

And he went, an hour or two later, you know, long past lunchtime and everything else, lunch wasn't important to me at that time, he was a person who was in need, and when he went away finally really satisfied and blessed, the Lord spoke to me and said, I have asked you to go into all nations, to all the world, and make disciples. And here, I sent someone right to your door, so you don't have to go outside, and he comes to you, and you were all the time waiting for him to leave, because I was, I was just getting impatient. And when I saw he was in need, I said, okay, I'll sit with him as long as he wants.

But I learned something that day, and I said, Lord, let that never again happen, where I see a witness in my spirit that I must spend time with this person, I must be willing to cancel my programs or postpone them. And so, I went back later, it just means sitting up a little more at night to complete that article. So, there are things like this where the Lord will also test us to see whether we have a spirit that's willing to serve others, but following the witness of the spirit, because if you don't follow the witness of the spirit, and you say, I've got a law that I'm going to serve everybody who comes to me, you'll have a nervous breakdown, without any doubt, and you'll wear yourself out.

So, the witness of the spirit, that's the ultimate thing that we learn from all these examples that we're looking at in the life of Jesus. So, we read here that Jesus went to, told this woman who had touched her daughter, take courage, your faith has made you well, and at once the woman was made well. Take that word, take courage.

Jesus was always encouraging people, never did he discourage people. Take courage means be encouraged, be encouraged. He would say, don't be afraid, fear not, fear not, don't be discouraged.

Words that people speak to us, that discourage us, and put fear into our hearts, are not from God. God is not, God does not give us a spirit of fear, or a spirit of condemnation, you've got to be very careful when you listen to a message, or a word that somebody gives you, if you find it's bringing fear and condemnation, reject it immediately. God is a God of encouragement, not a God who discourages us, or puts fear into our heart.

Be encouraged daughter, your faith has made you well. Notice in all these examples that we've been looking at, it's the faith that Jesus looked for, it's the faith which he was delighted to see, and which he emphasized in each of these cases, your faith, or your lack of faith. And there's one thing we learn from all this, that the Lord wants us to live by faith, live in total trust upon him, leaning upon him, depending upon him, this is the true Christian life.

All the Bible knowledge we have, and all the wonderful doctrines we know, and all the wonderful things we can teach and preach are worthless if we don't know how to live in this total dependence upon God. We move on to Matthew chapter 9 and verse 23, and when Jesus came into the official's house, Jairus' house, and saw the flute players and the crowd in noisy disorder, because you know the daughter had died, he began to say, depart, for the girl has not died, but is asleep. And they began laughing at him.

See again, there were many people who died in Israel during those three and a half years of Jesus' ministry. He raised up, as far as we know, only three from the dead. One was Lazarus, one was Jairus' daughter, and the other was the widow of Nain's son.

Now those are not the only three people whom Jesus heard had died in those years, in three and a half years of ministry. There must have been many people who died, and people must have heard about Jesus raising somebody from the dead, and may have gone to him and say, please come, somebody has died here. Jesus did not spend three and a half years raising everybody who died from the dead in Israel.

This is very important to understand. Again, what was the principle? It was not that these three were special to God, it was not that these three people had some special faith. I mean, we don't find Jairus here having any great faith, or anybody else there.

We don't find the widow of Nain having much faith, and Mary and Martha did not have much faith either. But again, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit. He was prompted by the Holy Spirit to go and raise somebody from the dead.

Another case here, there were maybe a hundred other people he heard died, he had no witness from the Spirit to go there. Again, the same principle, consistently, it's not a uniform law, thou shalt raise everyone from the dead. No.

Neither was it the opposite, thou shalt raise no one from the dead. It was always the leading of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes do it, sometimes don't do it.

Take for example, the time when Jesus went to the pool of Bethesda. You read in John chapter 5, he went there, it says in John chapter 5, to the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem, and it says there in verse 3 of John 5, a great multitude, multitude means what? What do you understand by that? 300? 500? I don't know. A multitude of people who were sick, blind, lame, withered means paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water, and a certain man was there, who had been there for 38 years, and Jesus goes up to him and asks him, do you wish to get well? And that man also didn't seem to have such great faith, because he was thinking of the moving of the water, and he said, I wish I could jump into the pool before anybody else because only one man is healed when the water is moved, and I never seem to get to the poolside in time to be the first person in.

Somebody else comes in and steps in before me, and I miss it. I've missed it for 38 years. And Jesus just said to him, arise, take up your bed, and walk.

And Jesus went away. What about the other 500 people there who were sick? Why didn't he go to them and ask them, do you want to get well? Every one of them would have said yes. And every one of them would have had as little faith as this man.

So again, we see God, Jesus didn't heal everybody. He left, say, hundreds of people here sick and healed one person. Why? The principle is he was led by the Holy Spirit.

The broader reason for that, one day when God makes everything plain, we will understand. Today we see darkly. But for us, it's enough to know that if we live by the Spirit, we'll never miss the will of God.

There are things God wants us to do. If we listen to the Spirit, we will do them. If we don't listen to the Spirit, we will not do them.

There are things God does not want us to do. If we listen to the Spirit, we'll avoid them. If we don't listen to the Spirit, we'll go and do them, and probably mess up God's work.

There are things which, if we do, will hinder God's work. I'll give you one example of that as well. If you turn to Acts of the Apostles, in chapter 3, we read there that Peter went to the gate of the temple, and there he saw this man who had been lame from his mother's womb, in being used to, being carried along, Acts 3, verse 2, they used to sit him down at the gate of the temple, which is called Beautiful.

And remember, in Acts chapter 4, it tells us this man was over 40 years old. So I don't know for how many years they had been bringing him to the temple. Maybe at least 10-20 years, bringing him every day to the gate of the temple, and he stretched out his hand, asking for alms, verse 3, and Peter said, look at me, he said, I don't have any money, but I'll give you what I have in the name of Jesus, verse 6, rise up and walk.

And he walked. Now what I want you to see is, surely this man must have been there during the last three-four years when Jesus came into that temple. So Jesus would walk past the gate called Beautiful, and every day see this lame man sitting there asking for alms.

And did Jesus say what Peter said? No. Jesus would give him some money, or he would tell Judas, please give him some money, and he'd move on. And he'd see him the next day, he'd give him some money.

He'd see him the next year, and the next year, all the three-and-a-half years he was there, never healed him, give him some money. Why? Because as Jesus passed by, the Spirit said, don't heal him. And consider this now.

If Jesus had actually healed him then, what would have happened? This revival that took place here, because of this healing, would never have taken place. It says, because of this man's healing, we read here in Acts 4, verse 4, many of those who had heard the message believed, and the number of them came to be 5,000. And it was all because of this man's healing, as you read in the whole section there.

5,000 people believed. I don't know how many were actually converted that day, but many hundreds, perhaps, or thousands. And it was a result of this man, this lame man, not being healed by Jesus one or two years earlier, but being healed now.

If he had been healed by Jesus, he wouldn't have been at the gate of the temple, and people wouldn't have seen that miracle. So you see how, if Jesus had not listened to the Spirit, and just said, oh, I have compassion on this sick man, let me just heal him, whether the Spirit prompts me or not, I have the gift of healing, he would have hindered the work of the Father. That's just an example of how many Christians hinder the work of God by doing things which their reason says, it's a good thing.

What's wrong in helping somebody who's needy? There's nothing wrong. The question is, does the Spirit lead you to? For example, if there's a prodigal son living next door to you, and eating what the pigs are eating, you can, of course, help him, but you keep on helping him with food, he'll never go back to his father's house. You see how there can be a soulish compassion which prevents the prodigal son from ever going back to his father's house.

God was disciplining that young boy, and he needed to be disciplined so that he'd go back to his father's house. But some soulish Christian goes and helps him financially and with food, and he misses out on going back to his father's house. These are examples we see in Scripture of how, if we do things

according to our own reason, and not by the leading of the Spirit, we can cause a lot of problems.

So Jesus was always listening to the prompting of the Spirit. And so we read here in Jairus' case, daughter's case, the crowd had been put out, verse 25, he entered and took her by the hands, and we read that Jesus took only three people in with him to the room, Peter, James, and John. He drove out people who were just causing a problem there, and said, you fellas don't believe anything, don't stand here.

He gathered a few, he didn't want to show something fantastic, you know, I'm going to raise the dead, and it's good that all these people see it. Human reason, foolishness, he didn't want anybody to see it. He went inside and he raised him from the dead, and he just moved on.

He didn't even stay there. And this news went out into all that land. So we see here certain principles, and I believe that this is what Jesus is teaching us by his life.

We must be sensitive to the Holy Spirit in our ministry. We must respond where the Spirit prompts us. And I found in the years, in the early years, I didn't understand this principle, and I thought it's got to meet the need everywhere, because I have a gift, I'm able to teach, I can go here, go here, and go there.

And I've discovered that's not the way of God. The way of God is to live by the tree of life, which is by the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Think of this lovely verse in Isaiah chapter 30, which finds its fulfillment in the new covenant.

Isaiah 30, it says here in verse, Your ears shall hear, verse 21, your ears will hear a word behind you saying, this is the way, walk in it, when you turn to the right, or turn to the left. That's how we are supposed to live, every day, listening. When I'm turning to the Spirit of God saying, now go here, now go there.

And, or saying, don't go there. The Lord is looking for people who will respond to his call, and go where he tells them to go, and not go where he does not permit them to go. That is the way we are to serve the Lord.

The Spirit of God is faithful, this promise in verse 21 says, your eyes will see your teacher, in verse 21, that's Jesus. You see his example, you will see him. And then you can walk as he walked, and your ears will hear this word saying, turn to the right, turn to the left, don't go there.

It's not only in relation to avoiding temptation, but fulfilling God's will. The Spirit of God is very faithful to steer us away from places where we will be unnecessarily tempted, and to steer us away from places where we will waste our time. May God help us to walk this way.

We'll continue in our next episode.

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