

# All That Jesus Taught Bible Study - Part 49

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen emphasizes the necessity of spiritual commitment and understanding in the life of a believer through the teachings of Jesus.*

**Duration:** 24:48

**Scripture:** 2 Peter 2:20

**Topics:** "Discipleship", "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the teachings of Jesus in Matthew chapter 12, emphasizing the importance of replacing evil with good in our hearts to avoid a worse state. It warns against turning from the truth and highlights the need to be wholehearted disciples who prioritize spiritual relationships over earthly ones. The parable of the sower is explained, stressing the significance of allowing God's word to take deep root in our hearts to bear fruit amidst challenges and distractions.

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## Transcript

We continue our study today in all that Jesus taught, looking through the Gospels to see what Christ taught by his life and his words, which we are commanded in the last verse of Matthew to do ourselves and to proclaim in all nations. We're looking today at Matthew chapter 12, the last part of verse 45. We considered the first part of this section here in our last study, how when a person has cast out an evil spirit, when an evil spirit is cast out of a person, and he doesn't replace that empty space with the fullness of the Holy Spirit, then his last condition, it says here, can be worse than the first.

Notice what it says here in the last part of verse 45, the last state of that man becomes worse than the first, because that spirit goes and gets seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and goes and lives there. Now this is something that happens in the realm of the world of the spirits, which Jesus knew better than any of us. So, I don't try to understand it, I don't argue with one who knows everything about this realm of the spirits, but it's a warning that comes to us that when we cast out something evil, we must replace it with something good.

Peter says in 2 Peter and chapter 2, he speaks about those who have known the way of righteousness. 2 Peter chapter 2, if a man, verse 20, after escaping the defilements of the world, by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, that means something evil has been cast out from his heart, again he gets entangled in them, that means he keeps it empty and other worse spirits come and take over, and he's overcome, then the last state of that person has become worse than the first. Similar words to what Jesus

said here.

And in that case, Peter says, it would be better if such a man had never known the way of righteousness at all, than to have known it and to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. Is that possible for a believer? It certainly is, because he's speaking about someone who escaped the defilements of the world, by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, that means he was born again, and then he again got entangled in the same and was overcome, then his last state is much worse than his first, because now he knows the truth. And then, for such a person, it would have been far better, if he had never known the way of righteousness at all, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.

It shows us what an awesome responsibility is ours, once we know the truth. It's a very, very serious thing to know the truth and to turn from it. If you didn't know the truth, at least you could be forgiven.

And in this case, it has happened to them according to the true proverb, a dog returns to its own vomit. That means the dog has felt there was something bad it had swallowed, it's vomited it out. Something that you found was wrong in your life and you threw it out of your life, and then you go back to it again, like the dog returning to what it's vomited out, or a pig, after it's washed from all the filth, goes back to wallowing in the mire.

Now, these are strong words that Peter uses here, to warn believers who play the fool with sin, after they've come to know the Lord. He says in that case, it would be better if you don't know the Lord at all. He connects that with this, by quoting the same expression, the last state of that man, Matthew 12, 45, is worse than the first.

While he was still speaking, Matthew 12, 46, we read here that Jesus' mother, Mary, and brothers, were standing outside seeking to speak to him. And someone said to him, Behold, your mother and your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to you. And he answered the one who was telling him, saying, Who is my mother and who are my brothers? It's amazing that Jesus could speak like this.

If a Christian spoke like this today, someone would tell him, you need to be more Christ-like. But this is Christ-like. This is how Christ himself spoke.

Who is my mother? Who are my brothers? And stretching out his hand to his disciples, he said, Here are my mother and my brothers, because he who does the will of my Father in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother. So there he was saying that the spiritual relationship he had with those who were seeking to do the will of God was closer than a physical, earthly relationship. And that is one of the marks, one of the marks, that a person has really become a child of God.

It's a good thing for you to check up yourself on it. Can you say that your relationship, spiritually, after you're born again with God's children, is stronger than the relationship you have with your blood brothers and sisters? If not, I'm not saying you're not born again, but your birth is a very poor birth, maybe a premature birth, and there's something lacking in it. A genuine birth into God's kingdom will make you value not those who claim to be believers.

Unfortunately, today there are so many people who claim to be believers, who sit in good churches, but they're not really wholehearted disciples. But if you can imagine that, if you think, rather, that these wholehearted disciples are not as close to me as my own blood brothers and sisters, then you need to

seriously question your salvation. Because Jesus said here, who are my brothers? These who hear the word of God and do it.

These who do the will of my father in heaven. Now these are strong words, and Jesus said that's one of the conditions of discipleship. He said if you want to be a disciple, you've got to love me more than you love your father and mother and brothers and sisters, all your earthly relationships.

This is the reason why many Christians do not grow as much and as quickly as they should, because their earthly relationships continue to mean much more to them than the spiritual relationship with brothers and sisters. Of course, people can say, well, there are so many among the believers who are hypocrites. Forget them.

I'm not talking about your relationship with them at all. But don't you know at least a few wholehearted, radical disciples of Jesus? What is your relationship with them? Well, if you say there's nobody like that in my church, well, then you shouldn't be in that church. You should leave that, quit that church and find a church where at least there are a few wholehearted, radical disciples.

You'll never find a church where everybody's a wholehearted, radical disciple. Even Jesus' church of twelve had a crook in it, a hypocrite. So that's an 8% rate of hypocrites, and that is a good church.

So you'll never find a perfect church, but if you find a church where there are a number of radical, wholehearted disciples, that's why you should seek fellowship, because that relationship should be more important to you than any earthly relationship. And that's what we learn here. And I also want to say one more thing.

People who claim that the way to approach Jesus is through his mother Mary, well, you see, even on Earth there are two occasions where we read his mother tried to approach him. One was in the marriage of Cana, and Jesus turned around and said to her, woman, what have I got to do with you? My hour has not yet come. And the second is here, where his mother just wanted to talk to him, and he just rejected it and said, my mother and my brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.

So it's not a good plan to try and approach Jesus through Mary even today. It's so clear in Scripture for those who have eyes to see. And then in chapter 13, we have a number of parables that Jesus spoke to explain the different aspects of God's kingdom.

And one or two of those parables he explained, and the others he left unexplained, leaving it to us to seek to apply, to seek the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to understand them and to apply them to our lives. So let's look at the first one. The first one is the parable of the sower and the seed, perhaps the most well-known one.

He says a sower went out to sow. We're trying to understand all that Jesus taught. And here's what Jesus taught.

As he sowed the seeds, some seeds fell on the road and the birds came and ate it up. That's one type of bad ground. Others fell on rocky places where there was not much depth of earth.

And they sprang up quickly because there was not much depth. But when the sun had risen, it just withered away. The third ground was among thorns where there was depth of earth, all right.

But as it came up, the thorns came and choked it. And then the fourth, fifth and sixth, there were three bad grounds. Now here are the three good grounds.

Some people think there's only one good ground. No, there were three. In verse 8, one good ground produced a hundredfold crop.

That means one seed produced a hundred seeds. Another ground, one seed produced 60 seeds. And another ground, one seed produced 30 seeds.

They were not all the same quality. They were all good, but there were different degrees of goodness. Just like the bad soil, there are different degrees of badness.

And then he said, he who has ears to hear, let him hear. Then the disciples came to him afterwards and asked him, why do you speak to them in parables? Now, without realizing or without trying to understand what Jesus said or without even hearing what Jesus said, we sometimes think, a lot of Christians say, well Jesus spoke in parables so that people would be able to understand spiritual truth. But that's not true.

It's exactly the opposite. He said, to you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. See, there are many mysteries in God's kingdom.

Mysteries mean something only God can reveal to you by the Holy Spirit. And if that's not revealed to you, you can never understand it. You can go completely wrong if you try to understand it without God's help, without the help of the Holy Spirit.

A lot of the New Testament is like that. You cannot understand it without the Holy Spirit explaining it to you. And that's why when people go to the New Testament or even other parts of scripture with their human reason, they say, hey, this doesn't correspond with that.

And they begin to doubt whether this is God's word. God allows them to be deceived. The fundamental reason is because they don't love the truth.

So here we read, the mysteries of the kingdom were revealed to the disciples. Was it because they were the cleverest people of all? Not at all. But they were following Jesus Christ.

They loved Christ more than they loved their parents, brothers, sisters, and even their own job and themselves. And therefore the Lord says to you, this revelation is given as to what is the meaning of the kingdom of heaven. But to them it has not been granted.

And then he says in verse 12, whoever has, to him shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance. And whoever does not have, what he has shall be taken away from him. This is so contrary to the spirit of communism in the world.

Communists say whoever has, from him you must take away, so that you can give to the other one who doesn't have. And to him who doesn't have, you just give him from what the one who has. This is the exact opposite of communist philosophy.

And that's why I say Jesus was not a communist. Not at all. He was not a socialist.

The kingdom of heaven had certain values. It rewarded hard work. There's no doubt about it.

It doesn't take what a man earned through his hard work and give it to a poor lazy man who didn't have anything because he was too lazy to work. That's not what Jesus taught. And what did he mean to whoever has, to him will more be given.

The meaning is that if you're faithful with what you have, God will give you more. And some people have very little, like the man with the one talent who buried it. He's not faithful with the little he has, then one day even that one talent is taken away.

So when God gives you something, whether it's time, or money, or energy, or something that you can use for him. And you don't use it. You just use it on yourself or live selfishly.

Even that little opportunity you had to serve God will be taken away from you. You'll just drift along and be a waster in your life. But one who is faithful even maybe he has opportunity just to help one or two people.

He's faithful in that. God begins to expand his boundary. He's able to help more and more and more and more and more.

And he becomes a very useful servant of God one day. Then he says, now I'll explain to you why I'm speaking to these people in parables. Because seeing they do not see.

And hearing they do not hear. And they do not understand. So he's as it were speaking in parables so that they don't understand what he says.

It's the very opposite of what we think. This is not like an illustration in a message which is to clarify something. A parable, Jesus said, is to actually confuse people.

It's very interesting to hear that. And in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled which says you will keep on hearing but you will not understand. And you will keep on seeing but you will not perceive.

For the heart of these people has become dull. And with their ears they scarcely hear. And they have closed their eyes lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and return and turn from their sin that is and I should heal them.

So it's because of their wrong attitude to sin that they are not able to understand God's word. Remember this. The more radical your attitude towards sin is the more you will understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

This is the secret. But if their heart has become dull that means they don't listen to their conscience anymore and they are not really interested in hearing what God is saying. They don't take time to read the scriptures.

Then they will be deceived. They will be led astray. But the Lord said to his disciples Blessed are your eyes because they see and your ears because they hear.

And then he says do you know in ancient times there were so many righteous men and so many prophets verse 17 who eagerly desired to see what you are seeing and they did not see it. And to hear what you are now hearing and did not hear it. I have to say that many times to many people in our churches who hear the most amazing truths.

Some of you who are listening to this are listening to some of the most amazing truths that can be heard in this land and you can take it lightly. You can say yeah well just like a person's opinion or you can take scripture exactly like you've been hearing it and say Lord I've been tremendously privileged to hear these things because think of even a hundred years ago people in this country where you're living your ancestors couldn't hear these things or 200 years ago and for hundreds of years from the time of Christianity how many of your ancestors do you think heard the type of things you're able to hear today through this program and this teaching. We've got to be deeply thankful that we are able to see these things and be grateful to God and respond in gratitude by saying Lord I want to live for you because of the truth that you've taught me.

And then Jesus began to explain the parable of the sower. He says the first type of ground is one who listens to God's word very casually. He's not serious you know people who come and sit in a meeting and their mind is not on what's being proclaimed there.

Their mind is wandering here and there they hear something. The demons are there in every meeting to take away what we hear. That's what he says here.

The evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in the heart. Here's a preacher preaching something and the word of God is going into your heart and the devil comes to snatch it away. That's pictured in the birds of the air coming and eating up the seed which is sown on the roadside.

So some hearts are like that they go into a meeting and they hardly get anything out of that meeting and even if they do before any of that seed can produce any fruit in their life the devil has taken it all away. So this is the first type of heart. We've got to be very careful that our heart is not like that.

The second, the same seed is remember the same seed is sown in all these six types of ground and the results are entirely different. It depends on the response from the hearer. If the hearer is sluggish in his response to God's word then of course there's not going to be any fruit if he allows the devil to take it all away.

And if you look back at all the messages you've heard in the past you'll have to acknowledge that there's some wonderful messages which you heard in the past at the end of a meeting where you took decisions and said Lord I want to wholeheartedly radically respond to that and live for you and then a few weeks later or months later it's gone from your life, the effect of that message. The birds of the air have come and succeeded in taking away the seed and remember the birds of the air are there in every single meeting. Every single meeting you ever go to the demons are there to try and take away that word.

The second type of ground is that which went on rocky places that is immediately springs up. There's a great excitement they say hallelujah, praise the Lord, this is a great message and all that. You know some people their temperament is like that.

They quickly express their appreciation and they're really excited about what they've heard but a little while later when some persecution arises they don't have roots in other words beneath the surface they're very shallow. There's a lot of exuberance on the outside and a lot of apparent interest in God's word but the word of God does not go deep into their heart and so what happens is because they don't have a firm root when the sun rises which is some type of persecution comes upon them they just wither away and they fall away which teaches us that if we allow God's word to take deep root in our hearts then when persecution comes we will not fall away. We don't have to worry about it.

That's why the time to prepare for persecution of Christians is now when there is no persecution in times of peace we must prepare for war and so we see here the third type of ground is the one on whom seed was sown and he responds. He's got depth of earth. He's serious.

He's not like these shooting stars that suddenly appear in the sky for a while very bright and then disappear. I mean I've seen lots of believers like that. They come to our meetings and they're apparently so gripped in the beginning but in just a little while they're no longer there.

They're like a shooting star that crossed across the sky and then it's gone. It's destroyed. It's gone.

Now we're not to be like that. This one was not like that. He heard the word, appreciated it, listened to it and allowed the word to sink deep and come up well and it looked as if it was going really well.

We've seen believers like this too and then as it's grown maybe he was converted when he was 16, 17 and he didn't have a job. He didn't earn money and he was so gripped by the truth and he allowed it to sink in and he would meditate on God's word and everything was going wonderfully. This plant was coming up and growing so well and then he got a job with a really good salary and that became like a thorn that choked this fruit coming up, this plant coming up because now he had to spend so many hours at work and he didn't have to spend all that but he would spend extra so that he would make advancement in his profession and the demands for doing things better and competitiveness in certain fields.

Well, he decided he's got to give more time to it and gradually what happened? The deceitfulness of riches, the lust for other things and the worries of the world all types of worries came into him and choked this wonderful fruit and crushed it. That also I have seen. Wonderful young believers, wholehearted, radical and then the love of money grips them, chokes the word or all types of worries from the world and the desires for so many other things choke the word and the last one he refers to the good soil which has got three different types of good soil.

What do they do? They hear the word and understand it. They know this is what God's word says and they bear fruit. That means they are careful because the thorns may try to choke them too.

Every Christian faces the danger of being choked by the thorns of riches and worries and cares of this world and desires, so many desires which are contrary to God's word, constantly trying to choke the word but how is it it didn't succeed with these people? They watched over it and prevented it from crushing out the seed. Then how is it that some produce a hundredfold, some sixty and some thirtyfold? Some were faithful but then occasionally careless. Some were faithful and careless not so often and some were utterly faithful.

So even among believers there are different degrees of faithfulness. There are people who produce thirtyfold, people who produce sixtyfold and people who produce hundredfold and God is looking for those who will be steadfast in continuing to be faithful in keeping that word, watering it, preserving it, meditating on it, allowing it to grow up to be a strong tree for the glory of God. We'll continue in our next episode.

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