

All That Jesus Taught Bible Study - Part 59

by Zac Poonen

Jesus' teaching on little children, disciplinary matters in a church, and forgiveness are essential for our spiritual growth and well-being.

Duration: 25:23

Scripture: Matthew 18:11, Matthew 18:14-35, Luke 17:3-4

Topics: "Forgiveness", "Discipleship"

Description

This sermon delves into the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 18, emphasizing the importance of seeking and saving little children, the need for Sunday school teachings to protect and guide children, the significance of forgiveness and the consequences of an unforgiving spirit, and the power of binding and loosing in the church. It also explores the parable of the unforgiving servant to illustrate the magnitude of God's forgiveness and the necessity for believers to extend the same forgiveness to others.

Transcript

We continue our study today on all that Jesus taught, looking through the Gospels, seeking to obey the last verse of Matthew 28, to teach in all nations everything that Jesus commanded. And in order to do that, we have been looking through the Gospel of Matthew to see what Jesus taught through his life, by his words, and by the circumstances into which he brought his disciples, through which he trained them to understand his ways. God's ways are not our ways, and to understand them, we need to look at Christ and the way he lived and spoke, and align ourselves with his ways to allow the Holy Spirit to renew our mind, to think and act like he did.

So we now come to Matthew chapter 18 and verse 11, where Jesus said the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. Remember the previous 10 verses, he's talking about little children. And even the little children, Jesus came to seek and to save them.

When you read that verse in the context of the previous verses, you find he's talking about seeking and saving little children, bringing them to faith. Now there are a lot of people who don't believe in bringing little children to faith, but Jesus did believe in it because he was interested in seeking and saving them. It's better to see what Jesus says rather than to see what clever preachers today have to say on this subject.

Verse 12, what do you think? And remember the subject is little children whom the Son of Man has come to seek and to save. If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, and let's say that

one is a little lamb, not even a sheep, doesn't he leave the 99 on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying? And if it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you he rejoices over it more than over the 99 which have not gone astray. To rejoice over one little lamb, one little child that has found Christ and surrendered his or her life to Christ.

Thus it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones perish. Again the emphasis is almost as though the Lord knew that in the 21st century a new teaching will arise among some evangelical Christians that we should not tell little children to receive Jesus as their Savior because he doesn't mean anything. Well it's not the will of your Father that even one of these little ones perish.

Almost as though those folks have never read these verses. We praise God for Sunday schools and for all those who work among little children so that they can put faith into their heart. I remember when I was a little boy and I used to go to Sunday school and many times I asked Jesus to come into my heart and I did not know which was the right time and the assurance came into my heart much later, but I know it was that Sunday school teaching which protected me from gross sins when I joined the military.

I was in the military academy and in the Navy and many of my colleagues would go into gross sins. What protected me was that teaching that I received in Sunday school which in those days I was not even really converted perhaps, but it protected me even though I was unconverted. That little fear of God that is put into my heart.

So I thank God for those teachers in Sunday school who put a little fear of God into my heart and I want to say to all of you who work with little children, be encouraged by this verse, it is not the will of your father, Matthew 18, 14, that even one of these little ones perish. God wants every one of those children to be saved. You know, Pharaoh told Moses, you men go and serve the Lord if you want, leave the little ones here.

And you think Pharaoh would do that? I mean a lot of people today leave their little ones in Egypt and don't seem to be bothered by it, but not Moses. Moses said we're not going to leave our little ones behind, we're going to take them out of Egypt. That's the passion you must have, dear brother, sister, if you're an elder in a church, dear brother, or if you're a father and mother, brother or sister, you need to have that passion.

We are not going to leave our little children behind in Egypt, it is not God's will that even one of these little ones perish eternally, but the good shepherd wants to go after those little lambs, put them on his shoulder, and carry them home, and he does that through his servants nowadays. And so I want to encourage you to understand what Jesus taught about leading little children to faith, to repentance, because they've got things to repent of as well, they've got things to go and apologize to their parents perhaps, to their teachers perhaps, and turn back to God. And then he goes on to speak in verse 15 to 20 about local church situations where discipline is needed.

In Matthew 16, 18, there are only two times, by the way, when Jesus spoke about the church. He used the word church, as far as we know, certainly in the Gospels, only twice. In Matthew 16 and Matthew 18.

In Matthew 16, 18, he speaks about the worldwide church, the entire body of Christ, many of whom are already in heaven, and many in distant different countries. But in Matthew 18, he speaks about the local church. See there's the universal church and the local church.

The universal church is the total body of Christ, mentioned in Matthew 16, 18. The local church is the local expression of that body of Christ, which Christ mentions in Matthew 18, 17. This is a church of people to whom you can speak.

You can't speak to the worldwide church, they're all over the world. Nobody can ever speak to people in the worldwide church, and a lot of them are in heaven as well. But to the local church, you can speak.

So here he's speaking to people in a local church whom we have to speak to in a situation where a brother has got to be disciplined. And here a situation arises where a brother in a church sins. Go and reprove him in private.

This is a principle that we must follow in all disciplinary matters in a church. The Lord recognizes that even a brother may sin. We don't believe that brothers don't sin.

We don't believe that believers will never sin. Believers can do wrong things. And it goes on further here to say that some of those believers may be so stubborn that they won't even listen to the elders going and speaking to them.

So he says if a brother sins, go and reprove him in private. If he listens to you, you have won your brother. If he does not listen to you, what should you do? There is the possibility that a brother may not listen to you.

He's stubborn in his disobedience and rebellion. Take one or two more with you so that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every fact may be confirmed. And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.

And if he refuses to listen even to the church, then let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector, as an outcast. So there are three stages here. You speak to him personally.

He doesn't listen. You speak to him with two or three others. He still doesn't listen.

And then the next alternative is to speak to the church and tell the church there's this brother who is not listening, who is not responding to correction. So we have put him out of the church. He's no longer a part of this church.

He's like a tax collector. He's an outsider. He's not part of the body of Christ here anymore.

What God does with him is God's business. But as far as this local church is concerned, we have relieved ourselves of all responsibility as far as he's concerned he's out. And then in that connection he says the church has got some authority.

Similar words to what he spoke in Matthew 16 and verse 19 which he said to Peter. So here he tells the elders of the church, obviously the two or three who go and speak to this man are the elders of the church and he doesn't even listen to them. Then all we can do is tell the church and then he says the church, the elders of the church can exercise the authority to bind and to lose.

And what they bind on earth will be bound in the heavenlies. What they lose on earth will be loosed in the heavenlies. We can put a person out of the church and have spiritual authority to bind satanic powers in the heavenlies who try to cause confusion in the church through such people.

That's why in one case we read in 1 Corinthians 5 that Paul handed over a person to Satan. He got that authority. He was exercising the authority that the Lord gave to apostles and elders over here.

Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask it will be done. See this binding, the authority for this binding in such a situation the Lord says is best exercised by at least two people. That means there are two godly men who are in agreement and they ask that in a situation satanic attempts to bring confusion into the church be bound and people who are in bondage be released.

Maybe a whole lot of people in the church are in bondage because of one person. Well we want to release those people. Because where two or three have gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst.

You see the whole context of this is talking about the church and verse 20 is almost like a definition of the church. It's two or three and if the Lord had said where 200 or 300 are gathered in my name there am I in the midst then I would never be a part of a small church. I say I look for a minimum of 200 people because you can have a church only with 200 people.

But thank God that he said where two or three and many of the early churches and some of the churches we've seen in different countries start with two or three gathering together in the name of Jesus with Christ in the middle and the Lord is there and we exercise authority in his name. But we need to understand here what it means to gather together in Jesus name. First of all what does the name Jesus mean? That's described in the very first chapter of Matthew where we're told the angel says you shall call his name Jesus Matthew 12:1 because he's going to save his people from their sins.

So it's a group of people who are gathering together in the name of Jesus which means one who's come to save his people from their sins. It's two or three people who want to be saved from their sins who are gathering together in this name. It's not just two or three people who are carnal and worldly and who are living for themselves and say we come in the name of Jesus.

That's a religious group which could be Babylon. They don't have any authority at all. It's two three people who have understood the meaning of the name of Jesus and who have come together in that name.

Never forget this. This verse is used glibly by every type of Christian group that imagines that Jesus is in their midst. Don't you think the church in Laodicea invoked this verse in their meetings whenever they met together? The church in Laodicea described in Revelation chapter 3 verse 14 onwards would gather together and say we thank you Lord you're in our midst according to Matthew 18:20 or they didn't have references those days according to your word which says that where two or three are gathered together in my name there I am in the midst.

But he wasn't in their midst. He tells them he tells the church in Laodicea in verse 20 I stand at the door and knock. If anyone will open the door and let me in I'll come in.

So where was he? Was he inside or outside the church? He was outside and he was seeking for entrance into individual lives because the church itself had rejected him. So a lot of churches today who claim to have Christ in their midst he's not in their midst at all. He's outside the door or probably nowhere near there or he's left left it and gone away long long ago.

He's given up trying to enter that church because the hopeless situation. So it's not just a question of religiously using the name of Jesus. Have you come together with understanding of the meaning of that name which means to be saved from our sins.

It's very important. And then Peter came and said to him in verse 21 Lord how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him. You know the Lord had been speaking about a brother who sins in verse 18.

A brother who sins in the church. Maybe he hurt somebody. So Peter is asking a question.

Well supposing a brother keeps doing this. Not just once. And how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him.

Maybe he repents and comes back and says I'm sorry because the Lord said that we can forgive a brother if he repents and comes back. I want you to compare this verse with Luke chapter 17 and verse 3. Be on your guard. Jesus says if your brother sins rebuke him.

Similar to what we read here. Matthew 18 15. And if he repents forgive him.

Well what if he doesn't repent. So this is the question. How often shall my brother sin.

Okay he repents and I forgive him. But how often should he do this. Supposing he comes to me so many times a day.

Well Jesus said. Peter you know tried to be very gracious and say shall I do that seven times. Seven times in a day.

No the Lord said. Seventy times seven. If you look at the parallel passage in Luke 17.

It says here if he sins against you seven times in a single day. Luke 17 verse 4. Seven times in a single day. And if a day is say 12 to 14 hours.

It means every two hours he does something wrong against you. Remember that. Every two hours he does something wrong.

And comes to you and says I'm sorry. Two hours later he again does something similar. And says I'm sorry.

I repent. And after two hours again. I mean by the time third or fourth time comes.

You can't even trust him. But the Lord says if he comes back to you seven times. In Luke 17 verse 4 forgive him.

And the apostle said in verse 5. Oh Lord increase our faith. Please help us to believe that this guy is genuine. When he comes back seven times in a day.

Give us faith to believe that. It's very difficult to believe. That when he comes back the seventh time he's genuine.

So here we read in Matthew 18. Similar words. How often shall I forgive him.

Up to seven times. In a day perhaps. And Jesus said to him.

I don't say to you seven times. But up to seventy times seven. 490 times in a day.

He comes and asks for forgiveness. Every few minutes he repeats the same thing. He says oh I'm sorry forgive me.

Few minutes later same thing. 490 times. What is the meaning of this? I mean nobody does the same thing 490 times a day.

Not even the worst husband and wife clash. Would be 490 times in a day. So what the Lord is meaning is.

Infinite number of times. Because that's how God forgave us. You can go to God a million times in a day.

He'll forgive you. He's always there to forgive. So we read here that.

Jesus then told a story. About how the basis for our forgiving others. It's very important to understand the basis.

On which we forgive others. Why do we forgive others constantly. Or why should we forgive others constantly.

He told a story about this man. Who was a king. Who wanted to settle accounts.

With the slaves. And as he began to settle them. There was a man who was brought to him.

Who owed him 10,000 talents. Now that's a lot of money. That's like 50 crores.

Or let's say 100 crores. 1,000 million rupees. Maybe a billion rupees.

So here's a man who owes 1 billion rupees. And he didn't have any means to repay 1 rupee. And the Lord commanded him to be sold.

Along with his wife and children. Till he had made repayment for everything. To be sold to slavery.

And the slave therefore fell down. Maybe to be locked up in jail or whatever it is. Anyway he was to be sold.

The slave therefore fell down and said. Please have patience with me. I will repay you everything.

First of all it was a ridiculous statement. How in the world is he going to repay 1 billion rupees. When he doesn't have anything to pay right now.

And he's a slave. The Lord of that slave felt compassion. Released him.

Forgave him the debt. He says okay. You're free.

You don't have to be sold as a slave. You don't have to go to jail. You're forgiven.

Go home. Be free. With your family.

And that slave went out and found another fellow slave. Who owed him. A hundred denary.

Now a hundred denary is. One denary is one day's wage. Laborer.

One day's wage for a laborer. That means not a skilled laborer. An ordinary laborer.

One day's wage. Let's say. Maybe a hundred rupees a day.

And this guy owed him ten thousand rupees. Now ten thousand rupees is not a small amount of money. It's quite a bit of money.

One hundred denary. For a laborer. It's three months salary.

Ten thousand rupees. And he caught him by the throat and said. Pay back my ten thousand bucks.

The fellow slave said exactly the same thing. He fell down before the other slave and said. Please have patience with me.

I'll repay you. Exactly the same words he had spoken to the king. And but this slave was unmerciful.

And he said. No I will not let you go. You got to pay up right now.

If you don't have what you owe. He took him to court. Got him convicted.

And got him put into jail. Until you pay back everything that you owe. Verse 30.

Some of the other slaves heard about this. And saw what happened. They were very grieved.

And they came to the Lord and said. You know what this guy did. Whom you forgave so much.

So the Lord called that slave back. And said. You wicked slave.

I forgave you. Verse 32. All the debt you.

Because you entreated me. Don't you think you should have had mercy on your fellow slave. Even as I had mercy on you.

Be merciful to others. Just as God has been merciful to you. Don't you think you should have done that.

And the Lord was so angry with this unmerciful slave. That he didn't just put him in jail. He said.

Get the torturers. In those days there were people who not only tortured. And not only put people in jail.

But who tortured these people in jail. So it was a double punishment. Until he repays that one billion rupees.

Which he'd never be able to repay. His lifetime in jail. And then.

What is the point of this story? Jesus said. So will my heavenly father. Do to each of you.

Who does not forgive his brother. From his heart. So this is talking about a believer.

Not forgiving another believer. Somebody who has done some wrong to you. You don't forgive him.

And not only just externally. But you don't forgive him from your heart. It doesn't matter what that crime is.

It is still. Less than one thousandth of what you have done to God. Maybe you feel that that person has done a terrible crime against you.

But it's like one billion rupees and ten thousand rupees. Maybe it's a big thing. Ten thousand rupees is a big amount of money.

But when you compare it to one billion. It's one hundred thousandth of it. What's that? So many zeros and then one.

Point so many zeros and one. That means what we owe to God. Is one hundred thousand times what anybody in the world can owe to us.

So why can't you forgive? That's the point. And that's the point of the parable. And who are these torturers in the spiritual terms? They are the demons.

This means that God can actually allow demons to torture believers. Because of an unforgiving spirit they have towards others. And I really believe this is the reason why many believers are sick.

I'm not saying that all sickness is caused by sin or an unforgiving spirit. But I'm absolutely convinced that a lot of sickness among believers is caused by an unforgiving spirit. Maybe twenty percent of sicknesses among believers.

Maybe eighty percent of sicknesses are caused by the fact that we live in a world which is under the curse. And so there are germs and sicknesses all around and anybody can get it. And that's true.

But at least twenty percent of those sicknesses I think are caused by sin. Sinful attitudes. Bitterness.

Anxiety. Worry. Fear.

And an unforgiving spirit. A bitterness against other persons. A heart that is not forgiving others.

And I also believe this is the reason why a lot of prayers are not answered. The Bible says you can move a mountain with prayer. But before you can move that mountain you must forgive others.

That's what Jesus said. So here, torturers. Do you find your life being tortured? Your mind being tortured and tortured and tortured? Your body suffering with a lot of sicknesses? Dear brother, sister, consider this possibility.

That there may be people you have not forgiven. In the same way that God forgave you. Maybe you superficially said that.

But you keep a grudge against them and you still want to fight with them. Well, the torturers will keep troubling you. Till you release those people.

But you say they have done such terrible harm to you. Well, not more than the harm that you've done to God. And so if we compare what others have done to us with what we did.

And how God forgave us. Then it becomes easy to forgive other people. So I hope we learn a lesson from this.

And that we will make sure that because God has forgiven us so much. Not just to be healed from our sicknesses. But because God has forgiven us so much.

That we openly, gladly forgive others. We'll continue this study in our next episode.

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