

All That Jesus Taught Bible Study - Part 64

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of repentance, obedience, and brokenness in order to be used by God, and the need for humility and faith in receiving God's gift of salvation.

Duration: 26:22

Scripture: Matthew 21:33

Topics: "True Righteousness", "Repentance"

Description

This sermon delves into the importance of repentance, obedience, and true righteousness in the eyes of God. It emphasizes the need for genuine transformation and obedience over mere religious activities. The parables shared by Jesus highlight the rejection of self-righteousness and the call to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ for true acceptance into God's kingdom.

Transcript

We continue our study in all that Jesus taught. We've been looking through the Gospel of Matthew, and we have come to chapter 21 and verse 33. We just considered how Jesus was saying to the religious people of his day that the tax collectors and prostitutes, the crooks and the prostitutes, verse 31, would go into God's kingdom before those religious people.

And it's a word that the Lord has to speak to many Christians today who imagine that they're going into God's kingdom because they are religious, and they know the Bible, and they go to church regularly, but there's no repentance in their life. The emphasis in the last parable that he spoke was repentance. The second son repented, verse 30, and went and did God's will, whereas the first son just said with words, I'll do it, but never did it.

Always the contrast, like in the case of the wise man who built on the rock and the foolish man who built on the sand, is between words of understanding and obedience. Here also there were words, I will do it, but he never did anything. The other one initially said, I won't do it, but later on repented and did it.

Again, the emphasis is on obedience. It's the one who obeys. Who finally is accepted.

Not the one who says nice words. Today, we have a lot of Christians who speak nice words in prayer, in singing, in fasting, in prayer, in preaching, but there's very little obedience in their life, in their private lives. So that's the emphasis here, and that's why he said the repentant cheats and prostitutes will get into God's

kingdom before a whole lot of religious people who think that because of their religiosity and religious activities, they will enter God's kingdom.

This is the great deception that needs to be exposed in our day. And then he relates to John the Baptist, and he says, you did not feel remorse, verse 32. Again, the emphasis is on remorse and repentance, just like in verse 30.

And then he carried on with another parable on the same theme. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, verse 33 of Matthew 21. And put a wall around it, and had dug a winepress in it, and built a tower, and rented it out to wine growers who went on a journey.

And when the harvest time came, he sent his slaves to receive his produce. And the wine growers took the slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. This is referring to the Jewish people who killed the prophets that God had sent to them.

And then he sent another group of slaves larger than the first, and they did the same thing to them. They rejected the prophets that came to them, one by one from God. But when the wine, and then finally, the landowner said, I'll send my son.

They'll respect my son. And when the wine growers saw the son, they said, hey, this is the heir. Let's kill him, and seize his inheritance.

And we won't be slaves anymore. We'll be partners owning this property. And they took him, and threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

When the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those wine growers, to those who rented his property? They said to him, well, he will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other wine growers, who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons. And Jesus said, that's right. The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner.

So he's telling them, the time has come when God is going to put you all out, because you didn't give to him the produce of the field, which God gave you to cultivate for him. And so, you've treated his prophets badly. Now you mind the son of God, you're going to treat me badly.

God will take this vineyard away from you, and give it to others. And he's given it to the church. He's replaced Israel with the church.

We need to understand that clearly. And this parable makes it clearer than anything else. Because some people don't believe it.

They don't believe what Jesus said. There's no Jew or Gentile today. There's no special favorite of God.

No nation is his favorite. He promised an earthly blessing to Israel, and he's given it to them. He gave them their land.

But spiritually, the body of Christ, there's no Jew or Gentile, and God's not looking for any particular group of people today. Nobody's a favorite. It's very important to understand that Israel has been replaced by the church.

It's so clear. He gives out the vineyard to others. But the other thing I want you to see here is that the master himself never came to collect the produce.

He sent his servants, verse 34, to receive the produce. God sends his servants, who are his representatives. He does not come himself.

And the way you treat his servants, as far as God is concerned, is the way you treat him. We must bear this in mind. Now, I'm not talking about every pastor and preacher and everyone who calls himself a servant of God.

Ninety-nine percent of them are crooks. But there are some true, genuine prophets of God and servants of God in the world today. There are apostles and prophets even today.

And the way you treat them, God takes very serious note of. He must bear that in mind. He will bring them to a wretched end, they said.

The Lord said, that's right. And Jesus explained that, saying in the scriptures, there is a verse, Matthew 22 and verse 42. This is a quotation from Psalm 118, verse 22.

The stone which the builders rejected, that became the chief cornerstone. And this came about from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes. See, in the Old Testament times and construction of buildings, the most important stone was a cornerstone.

They didn't have concrete pillars those days. They never used concrete in building. They built with the foundation and with pillars.

And so the most important stone was the cornerstone, which they put in first in the corner of a building. And that stone had to be perfectly shaped in three dimensions, at perfect right angles in up, down, east, west direction. All directions it had to be perfectly at right angles.

Because if it was slightly crooked in any one angle, then all the stones that align with it would become crooked. And so the cornerstone had to be the most important cornerstone. And there were maybe different stones that were shaped and cut so that you get, could get one which is perfect.

And he's talking about a situation where, to build a big temple or building, the builders looked at one particular cornerstone, another one, another one, and they rejected that, and finally took this one. And then finally, they find this one isn't leading the temple or the building to be built at an angle. So they throw it away and look back, and they had to pick up finally the stone that they rejected.

That was the one that was perfect. And so that's what he's referring to. The stone which the builders rejected became the chief cornerstone, and that's what the Lord did.

The Christ whom the Jews rejected has become the cornerstone of God's house. Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruit of it. God has given his kingdom to those who will produce fruit for him.

Remember this. Those who will produce fruit for him. And then he talks about this stone.

He's always expecting fruit. Jesus once said, I have chosen you and ordained you that you must go and bring forth fruit, John 15, and that your fruit might remain. God doesn't want us to live fruitless lives.

None of us. It is God's will that every single one of us bring forth fruit in our lives for the glory of God. And so, keep that in mind.

God will take away the kingdom from you and give it to a nation that's going to produce the fruit. And then he says, the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust. So when you think he's now using another picture, the first it was a picture of a cornerstone, which is the most important stone in that building, and now he's using a picture of a stone over which you can fall and be broken or if you don't fall and be broken on that, the stone will come and fall on you and crush you like dust.

See, when we come to the Lord, the Lord has to break us before he can use us. This is the fundamental principle in all of God's dealings with man. We have to be broken before we can be used.

The Lord took the bread and blessed it. That's the first step. Then he broke it and then fed the multitude.

It's not enough to be blessed. We need to be broken and I see so many people have been blessed by God, anointed with the Holy Spirit, which is a mark of God's blessing, but because they are not broken, the multitude cannot be fed. They have to be blessed and broken and then only the multitude can be fed.

And so, brokenness is a very, very important part of the Christian life, and God himself arranges circumstances for us to be broken. Even Jesus needed to go this way for 30 years. He had to live in submission to imperfect parents.

Remember, Joseph and Mary were very imperfect, old covenant parents, but he had to submit to imperfect parents so that he could be broken. And it's interesting to understand that, that even Jesus needed to be broken. It says in Isaiah 53, it pleased the Lord to bruise him.

It pleases the Lord to bruise us, too. And we see here that you can fall upon this stone on Christ and say, Lord, I want to be broken. I want to be totally broken like you were.

And the Lord will use circumstances. He'll use people. If you're young, maybe your parents, or if you're a little older, maybe elders who don't understand you, who misunderstand you.

All types of circumstances and situations God can use. In order to break you to pieces. Or, if you don't respond to that, then the stone comes and falls on you and crushes you into nothing.

So it's much better to be broken. There are only two options. If you fall on this stone, you'll be broken.

And if you're not broken, then the stone will fall on you and you'll be crushed. Well, it's far better to be broken. And so I say to all of you, seek for brokenness.

This is what all of us need more than anything else. God seeks to reduce us to zero before he can use us. Further, when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they understood that he was speaking about them.

They were offended that he was trying to say things about them. And when they sought to seize him, they feared the multitudes because they all said that he was a prophet. So it's interesting that even today when some people hear a strong convicting word from God, they feel disturbed saying this preacher is trying to speak to me.

I remember once when some man came to me at the end of a message I had preached somewhere. And he said, Brother Zach, were you preaching to me? I said, absolutely right. I was preaching to you and to all the other people sitting here.

I wasn't preaching to the pillars and the chairs over here. I was preaching to all of you who are sitting here listening to me. So when somebody says, are you preaching to me? I hope your answer is yes.

We are preaching to the people who sit in front of us. We're not preaching to the walls. And so we are not afraid of people you know, trying to manipulate our words.

God will keep us from such harm that comes through that. And when the chief priests understood they're speaking about him, their anger made them want to grab him and kill him, but they were afraid of the people. You see, throughout, very often the chief priest's actions are always determined by what will the people say.

And when a Christian preacher, his actions and words are determined by what will the people say? What will the people think? Then you know he's not a servant of God. He's a servant of men. So we go on now to Matthew chapter 22.

And Jesus answered and spoke to them again in parables saying, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. Here's another very interesting and a very important parable because he's speaking about this great truth of justification by faith, how we can be clothed with the righteousness of Christ so that we can stand before God. Now I just want to explain the meaning of this parable in a nutshell before we go into it.

See, we have two things that hinder us from being able to stand before God, not just one. It's not just the sins we have committed in the past. It is also this filthy nature that we have inherited from Adam that prevents us from standing before God.

In my flesh dwells nothing good. How can I stand before God with that filthy flesh? Even if my past sins are forgiven. So my number one requirement is that all my past sins must be forgiven.

And then I need to have something needs to be done about this nature of mine. Because even if my sins are forgiven, I can't stand before God with this filthy nature. And that's why God justifies us.

He clothes us with the righteousness of Christ. Christ becomes our righteousness. We are placed in Christ and Christ dwells in us and Christ himself becomes our righteousness.

Or in other words, we're clothed with Christ's righteousness. Then we can stand before God. So God does two things for us.

Forgive us and justify us. Both are necessary. Otherwise, we can't stand before him.

So first the cleansing away of all our past sins right up to date because we confess them, acknowledge that we are sinners and then secondly clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Now keep that in mind as we come to this parable. So here was this parable where the king sent out his slaves, his prophets, to call those who were invited to the wedding feast.

They were unwilling to come. That's the nation of Israel were the first people whom God invited. You know, they all didn't come because of various reasons.

He sent slaves again. He sent out the prophets again and then tell them everybody. He says that I prepared my dinner, the oxen, fat and livestock.

Everything is ready. I've taken so much pains to prepare this feast for the wedding of my son. But they paid no attention.

Verse 5. They completely ignored the message of the prophets. They went their way. One went to take care of his farm.

Another went on his business. The rest of them just caught the slaves and mistreated them and killed some of them. And when the king heard this, he was angry and he sent his armies and destroyed those murders and they set their city on fire.

See again, all these parables Jesus was trying to say how the initial people whom God called have failed and God's rejecting them. You know, every one of these right from the parable of the two sons and parable of the landowner and the parable of the marriage feast, you see, the initial people whom God called, the nation of Israel, were rejected. They did not respond to the invitation.

And so he goes to others. Then he said to his slaves, the wedding is ready, but those who are invited were not worthy. The Jewish nation was not worthy.

They went after their business. So you go into the main highways and bring as many as you can find there to the wedding feast. Well, he said there are people on the streets.

There are beggars. There are tramps here and there go to the parks and go to the streets and pull out everybody and ask them to come for a wedding feast. Of course, the tramps were delighted.

The king's inviting me for a wedding feast and every beggar was delighted to come. It says here, those slaves went out into the streets, verse 10, and gathered together all whom they found, both evil and good means some of murders and thieves or whatever they were, pick them all up and good people and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests. Now you see these people were tramps and beggars and you can't come into the feast of a king in those filthy clothes.

So though it's not written here, which we can deduce from this, that the king at the gate of the palace offered a free beautiful white robe to every single invitee. Because most of them were poor, so he says, I'd like you to put on this robe when you go and then all your nakedness and your filthy dress will not be seen. And so the people who were beggars, whose clothes were all in rags, they were absolutely thrilled.

Hey, this is great. I thought I'd be embarrassed throughout the feast because of my clothes, but the king has been so good. He's clothed me with this garment, which is a picture of the garments of righteousness.

And so they wore that robe and went into the feast. And I can imagine one man came along who was not a tramp or a beggar, but who was invited, one of the other Gentiles, but one who came dressed properly, maybe in a suit and a tie and he came in a suit and a tie and he said, I don't need your garment. I'm quite okay as I am.

And they said, no, but the king's asked everybody to put on this garment. He said, no, I think my dress is good enough. And he goes and sits there in that dress.

And when the king came, verse 11, to look at all the dinner guests, you know, he sees everybody in white except this one guy sitting over there who is without the wedding clothes. And he asked him, how did you get in here? How did you come in here without the wedding clothes? And he was speechless. He couldn't say, nobody offered it to me because it was offered at the gate freely to everyone.

He couldn't say, I didn't have enough money to buy it because it was offered freely. So what excuse could he give? Nothing. The real reason was, I thought my dress was good enough.

And the king said, bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place, they'll be weeping and gnashing of teeth. So this is a word to self-righteous people who feel that, I'm not so bad.

I'm not so bad like these other sinners. The dirty, ragged clothes symbol on some people symbolize, you know, people who have lived in gross sin. And this well-dressed man symbolizes a righteous person who's probably from childhood, grown up, in a God-fearing family and therefore has not committed all those terrible sins that the other people have committed.

So in a sense, his clothes are not ragged. Like the Pharisees, you know, who could say, we fast, we tithe, we pray, we've kept all the requirements of the law, and we're pretty good as we are. We can come to God just as we are.

And Jesus demolishes that idea that they can come to God just as they are. Because it says in Isaiah 64 and verse 6, Isaiah 64 verse 6 says, our righteousness is like filthy rags in God's eyes. Not our bad deeds.

I mean our bad deeds being like filthy rags is understandable. But our righteousness is like filthy rags, Isaiah 64 6. That means all the good things we have done, when we bring them before God, it's equivalent to filthy rags. Because it could have been run, done with the wrong motive, for our own glory.

It's like, you know, if a beautiful apple is in the hand of a person whose hand is infected with a very infectious disease and pus oozing out from that hand, and he offers you this beautiful apple. You'd say, well, no, thank you. I don't want it.

But he says it's a beautiful apple. He says, that's right. But there's the hands infected with pus and all that.

And therefore, though the apple is good, it becomes bad because it's coming from your hand. And that's how our good deeds are corrupt in God's eyes. It's very important to see that.

And though we may look as if it looks pretty clean, like this man felt, I'm dressed pretty neatly. I'm not like these other fellows who are living in sin. That's right.

But there's filth in our, in our nature, and that corrupts even the good deeds that we do. And that's why it's very difficult for those who are, who are externally righteous to see the need of a Savior. They think, I'm all right as I am.

Why do I need a Savior? Well, everyone needs a Savior. Romans chapter 1 and chapter 2 are dealing with two types of sinners. Romans 1 is dealing with the godless sinner, and Romans 2 is dealing with the righteous sinner.

The one who's the religious sinner, let's say. And both, it says in Romans 3, are guilty, and both need to be justified, to be clothed with the righteousness. That's the practical, practical application of this parable.

And the interesting thing is that this person, who came in like that, wasn't just put out. He wasn't just asked to leave the palace. He was bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness.

Verse 13, where there's weeping and gnashing of teeth. So, think what he lost. He lost, I mean, something, because he went there.

He got thrown into outer darkness. So, the Lord was saying that the self-righteous people in the church are the ones who are going to be thrown out. People can come into the church and sit there for many years, and one day they'll get thrown out because of self-righteousness.

Because they look down on others who they think are not as holy as they are, and they are proud of their own righteousness. That's the message in this parable. And then Jesus concludes by saying, Many are called, but a few are chosen.

It's not that God arbitrarily chooses some out of the many who are called, not at all. There's no partiality with God. But the fact remains that among the many who are called, only a few are chosen, because only a few respond and say, Lord, there's nothing good in my righteousness.

I want all of you. So, there's a very strong message that comes through in this parable. The basis on which God accepts us is that we acknowledge not only our sin, but that we have no righteousness in ourselves, and that Christ himself is our righteousness.

We'll continue in our next episode.

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