

All That Jesus Taught Bible Study - Part 71

by Zac Poonen

The sermon teaches us to be faithful with the gifts God has given us, to have a proper understanding of God, and to serve and help Jesus' disciples.

Duration: 25:57

Scripture: Matthew 7:22, Matthew 25:13-46, Romans 5:5, Galatians 6:10

Topics: "Second Coming", "Holy Spirit"

Description

This sermon delves into the teachings of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, focusing on the importance of being prepared for His second coming. It emphasizes the need to be filled with the Holy Spirit, to faithfully use the gifts God has given us, and to serve others in need as if serving Christ Himself. The parable of the talents illustrates the accountability we have in using what God has entrusted to us, highlighting the consequences of faithfulness and laziness. The final parable of the sheep and the goats underscores the significance of caring for fellow believers as a reflection of our love for Christ.

Transcript

We continue our study in all that Jesus taught. And we've been looking at the Gospel of Matthew, seeking to obey the command of Jesus in the last verse of Matthew, in the Great Commission to go and teach others to do everything that I've commanded. And we seek to understand what Jesus commanded by studying what he taught by his life, by his words and by the circumstances through which he led his disciples as he trained them.

We are now at Matthew 25. We looked in our last session at the parable of the ten virgins, the five wise and the five foolish. The five foolish had a flask full of oil symbolizing the fullness of the Holy Spirit, a heart full of love that enabled them to endure to the end.

That links with Matthew 24 and verse 12 and 13, because sin is going to increase in the last days. Most people's love will grow cold. The flame is going to die out.

And if you don't have a fullness of the Holy Spirit within, flooding your heart with God's love as it says in Romans 5.5, you will not be able to endure till the end. It says in 24.13, the one who endures to the end will be saved. The five wise virgins endured to the end, because they had a flask of oil symbolizing the fullness of the Holy Spirit that floods our heart with love for God and love for one another.

That's what we need to seek for earnestly in these days. And that's the way to be prepared for the coming of the Lord, to be alert for the coming of the Lord. It's not just keeping our good conscience, but really seeking to be filled with the Holy Spirit within and the love of God within our hearts.

We move on to Matthew 25, verse 14. All these parables that Jesus spoke are in relation to being prepared for the second coming of Christ. We saw the first one in Matthew 24, verse 43 onwards, about a servant who is always ready to serve people.

He knows the Lord will come suddenly. And verse 45 onwards of chapter 24, he gives the people the food at the proper time. In 25, verse 13, he's talking about our personal life and our walk with God.

In verse 14 onwards, he's talking about our ministry and the gifts God has given us. So each of these parables have got a different aspect of the Christian life. First, for those who are given responsibility in God's house to serve God's people.

The second one about the virgins, about our personal life. And the third one here about being faithful with the gifts God has given us. Matthew 25, verse 14, it says, It's like a man who's gone on a long journey.

That's a picture of Christ who's gone to heaven and he's going to return after now it's 2,000 years. Who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. The gifts of the Spirit are God's possessions.

They're not ours. He's entrusted them to us to be used as stewards for his glory. We're not supposed to use any gift that God gives us for our own glory.

And yet so many people are doing that. They use God's gifts, whether it's a gift of preaching or healing or whatever, to get honor and glory and a lot of money for themselves. That's a sin.

It's a crime. And then we read here that when it comes to gifts, God gives different numbers of gifts to different people. Some have more and some have less.

Not all are equal. There's another parable in Luke 19 where everybody gets the same amount. There he speaks about, in Luke 19, verse 11 onwards, about a man who called his slaves and gave each of them one mina.

And there everybody was equal. And that refers to areas in our life where we are all equal as believers. For example, all of us have got 24 hours a day.

No one has got more than 24 hours. It's exactly the same. What we do with our time is up to us.

Or we can say temptation. The range of temptation is exactly the same for all human beings. We're all tempted to anger and lust and selfishness and pride, etc., and bitterness and jealousy, everything.

Everyone has got the same, and different people have overcome to different extents. But here, in this parable, he's not talking about that. He's talking about different levels of gifts that he's given to different people. To one, he's given five.

To another, two. And to another, one. Now, we may say, why has God given more to some and less to others? That's his sovereign choice.

We read in 1 Corinthians 12 that the Holy Spirit sovereignly chooses whom to give what to and we cannot question it. He chooses one to be an apostle and another to be just a help. That's also a gift.

You read in the list of gifts in 1 Corinthians 12. So, God sovereignly chooses that and we cannot decide what we want. Now, the Bible does say we can all seek to prophesy.

We can't be prophets, but we can all seek to prophesy. But other than that, it's God who sovereignly chooses to give gifts to each person. And the number of gifts.

Think of a man like the Apostle Paul. He was an apostle and prophet and evangelist and teacher and shepherd, all rolled in one. He had all five.

Some have got two. Some have got one. But now, the thing is what we do with these gifts.

And it says here, immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them and gained five more talents. It's something immediate. He didn't waste time.

It's a wonderful thing when God gives us the Holy Spirit's power in certain gifts that we immediately begin to use it, to serve, to earn something for the Master. See, he wasn't earning for himself. The five talents that he got was to be given to the Master.

And that's the important thing we must remember that when God gives us a gift and we get something from it, it's His. Whatever profit you get from the exercise of your gift does not belong to you. It belongs to the Lord.

And the one who is faithful will recognize that. He won't take the credit or glory to himself. He'll give it all to the Lord.

So we're earning for the Lord. We're seeking the preeminence of Christ in everything. In the same manner, the one who received two, earned and gained two more.

The same manner means he also did it immediately. But the one who received one talent, he went away, dug it in the ground and hid his Master's money. This is a person who has used this one talent maybe to get some honor for himself.

Dug it in the ground means he connected it to this earth. He used it in a very earthly way. He buried it in an earthly way.

And how do people use earthly gifts? For themselves, of course. They don't use it for the glory of God or for others. Worldly-minded people don't seek the glory of God.

So here's a picture of a man who had a gift and he buried it in the ground means he behaved just like worldly people with that gift. He used it for his own glory or honor or to make money for himself or whatever it is. And there are millions of people like this or who just don't do anything with it.

God gives them a gift and just bury it and forget it because they're busy making money or doing something else in the world. So he dug it in the ground and hid his Master's money. After a long time, verse 19, the Master of these slaves came and settled accounts with them.

And the one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, You entrusted me five talents. See, I've gained five more talents. His Master said, Well done, good and faithful slave.

You were faithful with a few things. I'll put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your Master.

The one who received two talents came up and said, Master, you entrusted me two talents. See, I've gained two more. His Master said, Well done, good and faithful slave.

You were faithful with a few things. I'll put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of the Lord.

I want you to notice that the reward or commendation that he gave to the person who earned five and to the person who earned two were exactly the same. So when someone earns two, and you see this man's got two, and someone else has got five, you think that man's got more. And yet in God's eyes, they're the same.

And that's why the one who's got five should not look down upon the one who's got two or think he's better, because God's given him more. That's why he got more. God's given this man less, so he's expecting less from him.

And ultimately, it's a question of percentage. If you got two from two, you got 100%. You got five from five, you got 100%.

Now if the man with five talents had got only two, he would have got only 40%. It would have been much lower than the man who earned two. And this teaches us that we cannot compare our results of our service with one another.

Unfortunately, among Christians, there's a lot of comparison. One church compares itself with another church, and secretly, not openly. It's too crude to do it openly.

And secretly, one preacher compares his ministry with somebody else's, thinks he's accomplished so much for the Lord. It's very difficult to assess, almost impossible. Because God alone knows how much he's given us.

And it's percentage that matters, not how much we got, not whether you got two, three, or four talents. But what percentage of that, what percentage is that of what God gave us? If you got five, and God gave us five, then it's 100%. And if God gave that man only two, and he got two, that'd be 100%.

And the man who got one, all he needed to do was get one more. He'd get exactly the same reward and commendation as the other two. So it's very, very important to recognize this, that any type of comparison of our own ministry, and especially the success in our ministry, with somebody else's, is absolutely foolish.

It says here, further, when the master came to the person who had one talent, that this man came with the one talent and said, Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, gathering where you scattered no seed. Verse 24. Verse 25, I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground.

So here, see, what you have is yours. His master answered and said, You wicked, lazy slave. You knew I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed.

Then you ought to have at least put my money in the bank. On my arrival, I would have received my money back with some interest. So take away the talent from him and give it to the one who has the 10 talents.

What have we learned from this? The Lord says, I gave you something, and here, the reason why this one person, if what he's saying is the truth, we don't know whether he's speaking the truth, but anyway, he says here, I knew you to be a hard man. He had a wrong concept of God, and that's why he buried the talent. He thought God was a hard, demanding taskmaster who reaped where he had sowed nothing.

God isn't like that. God is so tender, compassionate, totally understanding, forgiving. He's not a hard person at all.

See, when we have a wrong concept of God, the result is that we waste our life, and we waste the talents God has given us. So it's very, very important to have a proper understanding of God because God is a very loving Father. Do you know God is a very, very loving Father? That is so important if you are to be effective in our service and if you are to be ready for the coming of the Lord.

Everything hinges on knowing the true nature of God, and there are many, many Christians who think of God as a very hard, legalistic person who's sticky about rules, and the reason is because that is how many preachers have portrayed him. The way many preachers are sticky about little, little rules gives people the impression that God is like that. God is not like that.

God is totally unlike any preacher you have ever seen. He is the kindest and most compassionate person in the universe, a person who is very easy to talk to, one who understands everything about us like a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him, the Bible says. Like a mother cares for a sucking child, God cares for us.

But this person did not know that, and it's a wrong understanding of God that prevented him from making use of what God had given him. Is that possibly true in your life as well? God's given you things and you've not been able to use them to its full potential because, not because you're not faithful, but because you've got a wrong understanding of God. And so it's very important to recognize that.

And what does the Master call this person? He calls him a wicked, lazy slave. To be lazy is to be wicked. Why was he lazy? Because he couldn't bother about trying, trading that.

You know, serving God is a lot of hard work. There's no doubt about it. There's a certain amount of risk involved as well in serving God.

You know, when you try to trade one talent or five talents or two talents, there's a certain amount of risk involved. But if we really trust God, he helps us. And so this man was wicked and lazy.

And that is what the Lord is going to say to anyone who has not used the talent God has given him. So you need to ask yourself whether you're using whatever God has given you. And that could be not only spiritual gifts, maybe he's given you money to use for his service.

To some he gives an abundance, to some a little less, some much less. But everyone has got something which he can use. You've got free time.

You've got energy. You've got spiritual gifts. Are you using them all for the glory of God? That's a very, very important question.

And he says, if you don't, then take it away and give it to the one who already has ten. For to everyone who has shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance, verse 29. But from the one who does not have, even what he does have, shall be taken away.

And cast out the worthless slave into outer darkness in that place where there's weeping and gnashing of feet. That's a pretty terrifying thing that if God has given us something and we just don't care for it and we waste it and spend it on ourselves, we can end up in outer darkness, finally, for all eternity, in verse 30. See, we are answerable to God.

That's what many Christians don't realize. The very fact that we've got life, God has allowed us to be born on earth, and we have the resources of earth God's given us, it brings upon us a tremendous responsibility. We are answerable to God for how we use the one life God has given us.

And if we neglect and bury it and don't care for God, then outer darkness is our eternal destiny. And the meaning of verse 29 is that everyone who has something and is faithful with what he has, he uses what he has, God gives him more. That's the meaning of verse 29.

To everyone who has shall more be given. Someone who has something and is very faithfully using that something for the glory of God, more will be given to him. But if someone has something and he doesn't use it at all, then gradually he can lose even what he has.

So that's a very interesting parable that we need to give heed to, the parable of talents. And then we have another picture of the final day of judgement and the basis on which God judges us. This is what we are seeing in these four parables, beginning in chapter 24 and verse 45.

The faithful slave who serves the master's food to those at the table, the wise virgins, and using the talents God gives us faithfully. And now here it's talking about the way we treat others who are in need around us. When the son of man comes in his glory and all the angels, he will sit on his glorious throne and all the nations will be gathered before him and he will separate them from one another.

As a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. This is the one place in scripture where Jesus talks about sheep and goats. And sheep are generally a picture of those who are his children and goats a picture of those who are not.

And when all the nations are gathered before him, he's going to separate them one from another like a sheep from the goats. And he'll put the sheep on his right side and the goats on the left. And the king will say to those on his right, that is the sheep, come you who are blessed of my father.

Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. There is a kingdom prepared for some people from before the worlds were created. That means before Genesis 1 verse 1, God reserved something for certain people whom he was going to create.

And it's not just anyone, it's those who used their life in a particular way for whom this kingdom is being reserved. And you see that in verse 19. It says here, I was hungry and you gave me something to eat.

I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in. I was naked and you clothed me.

I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me. These are called in verse 37, the righteous.

So what do the righteous do? They see Jesus in their fellow believers. That's the first thing you need to see, understand here. Because the righteous, they say, Lord verse 37, when did we see you hungry and feed you or thirsty or give you a drink? And he says, when did we see you a stranger or naked or see you sick or in prison? And the king will answer and say, truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of mine, the least of them, you did it to me.

So there we see something that when we do something for a brother, even a cup of cold water that we give, Jesus said, you're doing it unto him. See if you give me something in my hand, you're giving it to my body. And that includes the head.

So when you help a brother in Christ, the head takes note of it, that you've done something for one of his children. And so he says, I was in them. When that hungry brother was there, it was me.

And you saw me and you fed me. When that thirsty person was there, that believer, you saw me. Now this is not talking about general social work.

Very often this passage is misunderstood. People think from misunderstanding this passage that it's those who do social work who are going to go into God's kingdom. And those who don't do social work will be lost.

But read carefully. All the foolishness comes when people don't read scripture carefully. What does it say here exactly? Jesus said, in as much as you've done it to the least of these brothers of mine.

Verse 40. Not to every Tom, Dick and Harry you see on the street. Not to every beggar.

In as much as you helped all these people in the world. In as much as you helped all these creatures of mine. No.

It's limiting itself to a certain category of people. To the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of mine. Who are the brothers of Jesus? Well, Jesus already defined that earlier.

We saw that earlier in one of his statements where he said, these who do the will of God are my brothers. So, the brothers of Jesus are his disciples. And so, this passage is referring only to those who have helped his disciples.

Not those who have done social work for everybody in the world. Now, you may say, well, you mean God doesn't care for the people in the world? He certainly does. But here, I'm just saying that this parable is not referring to that.

Galatians 6, verse 10 says, Let us do good to all men. But especially to the household of faith. And then, the others come.

The goats. And he says, Depart from me, you accursed into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and the angels. Because when I was hungry, you didn't give me anything to eat.

I was hung thirsty and you didn't give me anything to drink. And I was sick and you didn't visit me. I was in prison and you didn't come and see me.

And they say, Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty? These are so-called believers who call him Lord. And he says, Inasmuch as you didn't do it to the least of these, you did not do it to me. They'll go away into eternal punishment.

But the righteous into eternal life. There's eternal punishment and there's eternal life. And just like eternal life is existing forever, eternal punishment is a punishment that goes on forever.

That's pretty clear. And so, here we see a contrast with another group that we've considered in Matthew chapter 7. See, here the righteous, when the Lord reminds them of what they did for him, he says, Lord, we can't remember that. When was that? The righteous are people who don't keep a record of the good they've done.

Lord, when did we feed some hungry person? When did we give water to a thirsty person? When did we clothe someone who was naked? When did we take a stranger in and don't even remember? Whereas, in Matthew 7, you read of another group of people who are standing at the judgment seat of Christ. Judgment seat of God and there he says, they say, Lord, we remember very well what all we did. Matthew 7, 22, we remember that we prophesied, we remember that we cast out demons, and we remember that we did many miracles.

And he says, depart from me, for I don't even know you. Do you keep a record of all the things that you have done, which you think you've done for the Lord, all the sacrifices that you've made? Then you're probably in the category of Matthew chapter 7. That group mentioned there in Matthew 7, 22, those are the ones who remember. Or are you in the category of this, the group mentioned in Matthew 25 and verse 35 to 40, who say, Lord, we don't remember what we did for you.

May the Lord help us to do good and then to forget about it. We'll be ready for the coming of Christ. We'll continue in our next episode.

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